

Sin

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. We explore each theme in worship and in our newsletter; in covenant groups, and religious education; and in our community outreach ministries, our literary journal and programs, and many other opportunities. The March theme is Sin.

"Sin" is not a word you hear often among Unitarian Universalists. We're not even convinced that all of the "seven deadly sins" are to be avoided – we much prefer pride to shame, and we know that lust has its positive attributes.

But if we don't talk about the idea of sin, then we might not address one of the messiest parts of human existence: our fallibility, and the effects of that fallibility on ourselves and those in our lives. When we no longer have religious language to describe falling short of our highest aspirations or being out of right relationship with God, we miss opportunities to engage around the brokenness and vulnerability that we all have.

In some Christian traditions, sin can be defined simply as wrongdoing, a violation of the teachings of God as described in Scripture or by church leaders. Another Christian viewpoint is to see sin as missing the mark, with Jesus serving as the ideal of a perfected human. That humans are all sinners is a common denominator of Christianity and the reason for Jesus' crucifixion on earth.

Jesus spent a lot of time with people who were considered egregious sinners, such as prostitutes and tax collectors, rather than with those who feigned perfection. In the Gospel of John, when the scribes and Pharisees were about to stone an adulterer, Jesus responded with "he who is without sin cast the first stone," pointing out the universality of sin.

But an acceptance that we all are fallible and broken and capable of wrongdoing is different from accepting original sin, the idea that we are born

depraved. Original sin, particularly as illustrated by the story of Adam, Eve, and the snake that led them to violate God's wishes, is generally rejected in Unitarian Universalism. Rather than viewing children as born into depravity, we welcome them as born whole and holy, without need for a church ritual to make them so.

We also reject the equating of sexuality and sin. Pleasure is not automatically suspect, but rather a positive human experience, and sexuality has a wide range of healthy expressions.

A lack of language around sin can make it hard for us to talk about both our own brokenness and our complicity in systemic evil. The Gospel call for people to "be perfect" and a modernist belief in the improvement of humankind "onward and upward forever" can create a culture of shame around imperfection and a denial of vulnerability. We may not be doomed and depraved in a Book-of-Genesis kind of way, but we must acknowledge that none of us gets to be pure.

That's particularly true in our capitalist republic, where it's all but impossible to keep our hands clean of the world's problems. Our consumer spending and tax dollars go to support business practices, mass incarcerations, environmental damage, and military activities that are not consistent with our beliefs. Interpersonally and globally, our daily lives alternate between sins of omission (the good things we should do but don't) and sins of commission (the things we shouldn't do but do anyway). Yet we must not dwell in guilt, an

emotion that, after serving its purpose as a wake-up call, can quickly turn useless.

We all have experience with sin, whether we call it that or not; truly none of us is fit to cast that first stone. Come, let us explore together.

— Jim Foti and this month's
theme team: Janne Eller-Isaacs,
Lisa Friedman, and Rob Eller-Isaacs.

Sin Resources

Books

The Confessions, by St. Augustine.
A demanding, towering classic of Christian literature that focuses on the sin of pride.

Leaves of Grass, by Walt Whitman –
This collection by the 19th century American poet is notable for the delight it takes in sensual pleasures at a time when doing so was widely viewed as immoral.

Ender's Game, by Orson Scott Card –
The protagonist of this sci-fi novel is a 10-year-old whiz kid who ends up killing people when the game he's playing turns out to be real. A movie version comes out this month.

Films

Amazing Grace — This 2006 drama tells the story of William Wilberforce's campaign against slave trade in the British Empire.

The Devil Is a Woman — Marlene Dietrich stars in this 1935 movie about a love triangle in Spain.

Just Words

A number of years ago Rob and I were hiking in the Alps and I saw the most amazing thing. Above us, people were gliding through the air in things that looked like giant kites. We walked further. It turned out that they were "taking off" from the cliff we were on. I watched with fascination as they took off and soared into the great expanse between land and sky. I was hooked. I declared at that moment that I was going to come back for my 50th birthday and learn to paraglide.

As my birthday approached, we signed up for a week long course and were accepted. Prior to our adventure in the Alps, we traveled in Southern France. While there, I managed to sprain my ankle very badly just a day before we were to depart for the paragliding instruction. Hobbling on one foot, I arrived. I was excused for the first day of instruction. By the second day I thought my ankle was healed enough to try. It didn't go well. I got caught up in the kite-like contraption. I wasn't able to run fast enough to get off the mountain side for a trial run. The main instructor was impatient with me but agreed to let me continue to try. At the end of the third day he gently released us from the class. I couldn't do what was necessary. But he did offer to take me in tandem for a ride at the end of the course.

We took off together and made it off the mountain. We soared over trees and hovered close to the glistening granite mountaintops. As we sailed over the valley where we were to land eventually, he gave me the controlling ropes to hold. Following his instructions, we turned this way and that. We climbed higher only to swoop down. As we drew closer to the mountains, the wind picked up. Every gust of wind sent me reaching for the controls so that we weren't buffeted by the wind. He laughed as I tried to compensate for the wind. He told me that I would get in more trouble trying to control things than if I just let the wind toss us a bit. Overcompensating and trying to stay in control was actually dangerous. So I loosened my hold a bit and let the wind sweep us along. It eventually died down and we slowly sailed down to the open field below us.

I loved to paraglide! Running off the mountain didn't feel courageous, but loosening my hold of the ropes did. I risked my sense of control. I had to be more receptive to the wind's currents in ways that were new and unknown, but I learned more through the risk of letting go. I lived through my fear and landed on the earth forever grateful for the chance to fly with the winds.

In the month of March every member and friend of Unity Church is going to be invited to participate in conversations about courage and vulnerability. I hope you will carve out the time to join in. I am sure we will all learn from each other as we tell our stories and seek to speak to the ways that a community can chart a new and unknown course.

— Janne

Annual Survey Results

The 2012 Congregational Survey results are posted on the church website. This annual survey is one of the main ways the Board evaluates our progress on the current Ends Statements and identifies areas where the church needs to dedicate more time and resources. Both a written summary and a power-point of complete results are available at <http://www.unityunitarian.org/board-of-trustees.html>.

The Wheel of Life

In Celebration

Zoe Victoria Wilson

born one more redeemer

December 7, 2012

to mother Vicky Wilson

and grandparents

Ann Romanczuk and Keith Wilson

In Memoriam

Duncan H. Baird

October, 26, 1917 —

February 7, 2013

Julie Handberg Retires!



On February 5, Julie Handberg gave notice of her retirement from her position as Office Manager at Unity Church. For the past 12-plus years, Julie has capably managed the office, coordinated memorial services and weddings, and managed the Holly Desk volunteers with efficiency, grace, and good humor.

Julie acknowledged that retirement is sure to be a dramatic transition in her life, but she looks forward to filling the former work hours with volunteering, classes, museums, theater, concerts, and time with friends and relatives. She wanted to share with the congregation what an honor and privilege it has been serving the members and friends of Unity Church.

Julie's last day will be April 26. She will be greatly missed by the staff and congregation but we wish her all the best!

Thank you, Julie!

MARCH SUNDAY WORSHIP

Sunday Worship Calendar

Sunday worship services are held at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m., and 4:30 p.m. except where noted. Sermon podcasts and archives are available online at www.unityunitarian.org.

March 3: *Awakened to Sin* — Rev. Stefan Jonasson

In his book *The Pardoner's Wallet*, Samuel McChord Crothers, who was minister of Unity Church from 1886 to 1894, wrote that, if he were "a duly licensed pardoner," he would confine his attention to "those sins which easily beset conscientious persons about half past two in the morning." Only the sleep of the completely just is refreshing and undisturbed, he observed, while many people of conscience lie awake contemplating sins of both commission and omission. What keeps you up at night? Or do you sleep completely undisturbed?

Rev. Stefan Jonasson is Director of Growth Strategies and Large Congregation Development for the Unitarian Universalist Association. A historian by avocation, he has a passion for the history of Unitarian Universalism in the Upper Midwest. Based in Winnipeg, Manitoba, he travels extensively to work with congregations on organizational development matters.

March 10: *Mercy Me* — Rob Eller-Isaacs

Just because we prefer not to talk about sin doesn't make it go away. "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone" causes us all to stand down. What is it? How do we deal with it. Rob and worship associate Mary Margaret Zindren will wrestle with this fallen angel.

March 17: *I Sing the Body Electric: Sin and Pleasure* — Janne Eller-Isaacs

Western culture and religions have often viewed the body as a source of pure evil and sin. These understandings still reverberate in our world today. Janne and worship associate, Patricia Ohmans will explore how we can reclaim a more holistic and saving view of our bodies and our lives.

March 24: *To Forgive the City's Sins* — Rob Eller-Isaacs

Jesus was accused of breaking God's law by offering forgiveness to sinners on the Sabbath. He obeyed a higher law. It was the law of love that made him go down into Jerusalem. Even knowing he would die in trying he felt he had to heal that sick City's soul. Rob and worship associate Bailey Webster will offer a service for Palm Sunday.

March 31: *Practice Resurrection, Easter Sunday*

Join the entire church family as we celebrate once again the meaning of resurrection in our own lives and in the lives of our communities.

Maundy Thursday Communion Service

March 28 • 7:00 p.m. • Ames Chapel

Please see the back cover for details.

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 the chosen community non-profit recipient. **Please make checks payable to Unity Church.**

March 3: Unitarian Universalist Association

This offering will go to support the Unitarian Universalist Association. Grants from Association Sunday funds will help religious professionals get ongoing training to support thriving congregations.

March 10: Camp Tamarack

Camp Tamarack is a non-denominational overnight summer camp located on Lake Sylvia for youth entering grades 4-9. Founded in 1970, the camp mission is to provide inner-city children with an opportunity to canoe, fish, swim, sing and play in a rural setting at a low cost. This offering will provide additional scholarships to campers whose families are unable to afford the already low-price of Camp Tamarack. The all-volunteer staff pays their way to camp and works to raise money during the year to keep the camp affordable. Unity Church member Dick Buggs is a supporter of Camp Tamarack.

March 17: Balazs Scholar

The Balazs Scholar Program brings a Unitarian Transylvanian minister to study in the U.S. at the Starr King School for the ministry by providing fundraising, administrative assistance and tuition to each new scholar. This year's Balazs Scholar, Rev. Adel Nagy, served as an interpreter for Unity Church pilgrims in recent trips to our sister church and village in Homorodszentpeter, Romania. Unity's Partner Church Team will provide opportunities to meet and talk with Rev. Nagy when she visits St. Paul in June.

March 24: Eco Education

Over the past 21 years, Eco Education has provided programs that have the goal of inspiring co-learning between youth and adults to transform their relationship with the environment and each other. Through innovative and culturally relevant programs, they offer after school and summer school experiences as well as environmental education curriculum that are integrated into middle school and high school classrooms. Jane Prince, a member of Unity Church is, a long time supporter and former board member of Eco Education.

March 31: Mano a Mano International Partners

Co-founded in 1994 by longtime Unity Church members Segundo and Joan Velasquez, Mano a Mano International Partners is dedicated to improving health and economic wellbeing in rural Bolivia. In collaboration with the Unity Church Mano a Mano Outreach Team, a group of Minnesota teachers will be traveling to two villages in Bolivia in June to learn more about their schools, deliver school supplies donated by Unity Church families and to provide teacher conferences in math and early childhood education.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES: ENDS CONVERSATION



Charting Our Course Together!

From Lia Rivamonte, Trustee

In case you thought serving on the Board of Trustees was dull, I ask you to reconsider. This year, we set course for writing the new ends statements*, an adventure that began in calm, contemplative waters that have since been churned by a “powerful” question: what does it mean to be courageous and vulnerable together?

What exactly is meant by “powerful” question?

Why have we chosen courageous and vulnerable as our mainsails?

Where do we propose to land?

What the heck does this have to do with the ends statements?

Good questions, all. Regarding the powerful** question, we began by trying to identify an all encompassing question that could work to capture ideas and feelings about what we should ask of our ourselves, of one another and of our church, from as many people as possible. After all, our ends represent the shore we are hoping to reach one day, these questions our navigational tools.

So, we talked and thought and thought some more, kicked around some promising themes and the idea of courage and vulnerability suddenly surfaced. We talked about how both are necessary for the kind of growth and insight we all seek. This idea startled us with its simplicity and excited us with its possibilities. Many of us, it seems, have experienced a time when we have either by accident or by choice, been left wide open, and forced to act. We took that deep breath and proceeded to do what we scarcely knew we were capable of doing, and were somehow transformed. This is what we wish for: an emotional, intellectual and spiritual openness that will move us forward in love, in understanding, and in making meaning of our lives. This is what we, as a church community, hope we can help one another to do. It is what we want our church to be known for: a religious community that works authentically through love, encourages leadership and has the courage to act for the betterment of our world.

Thus, our “powerful” question was born and our means to revisit and rewrite our ends statements became viable. This is where you come in. We have devised what we hope are inviting *ports of call* for you to come aboard this ship. Please find one or two ports of interest (from the offerings on page 5), share your stories of courage and vulnerability and help chart Unity’s course.

*Ends answer the question, “What differences do we want to have made and for which people at the end of five years?” To read our current ends statements, visit <http://www.unityunitarian.org/mission-and-ends.html>. Everything we do in our congregation is designed to help us achieve our ends.

***The Art of Powerful Questions: Catalyzing Insight, Innovation, and Action* by Eric E. Vogt, Juanita Brown, and David Isaacs

The Four Navigating Questions

1. Share a time in your own life when you did something that required both courage and vulnerability.
2. Tell about an experience of courage and vulnerability connected with church.
3. How could Unity Church help us act with courage and vulnerability
 - a. In our personal/family spiritual development? (within)
 - b. In our collective life as a congregation? (among)
 - c. In our role as change agents making a difference in the world? (beyond)
4. Thinking ahead to the next five years, what is it worth being courageous about as a church?

There are LOTS of ways for you to join the conversation about courage and vulnerability and consider these four key questions. Find an opportunity from the options on page 5 that appeals to you and participate!

All events are held at Unity Church. Reserve childcare for these events by contacting Christy Randall at christy@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x127 at least one week prior to the event.



CHARTING OUR COURSE TOGETHER!

Join the conversation!

Lia Rivamonte's board column describes the deep meaning and purpose for exploring courage and vulnerability together and what these qualities could mean for our future together as a congregation. Jump in with us! From movie nights to a sing-along to traditional facilitated discussions, there are LOTS of ways for you to join the conversation about courage and vulnerability and consider the four key questions we're asking. Find an opportunity from the options here that appeals to you and participate! All events are held at Unity Church. **Reserve childcare for these events by contacting Christy Randall at christy@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x127 at least one week prior to the event.**

Discussions

Gather with others to consider the role courage and vulnerability have played in your life and what we could imagine being courageous about together as a church in the future. Each session lasts an hour-and-a-half and you need only attend one session.

You may also request a facilitator or a facilitator guide to lead your Unity group through the Charting Our Course Together! discussion. Contact Bob Peskin at 651-263-5843 or bpeskin42@gmail.com for more information.

Wednesday, March 6 • 7:15–8:45 p.m.

Sunday, March 10 • 1:00–2:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 13 • 7:15–8:45 p.m.

Saturday, March 16 • 10:00–11:30 a.m.

Come to the Pancake Breakfast from 8:30–9:30 a.m. before the discussion!

Wednesday, March 20 • 7:15–8:45 p.m.

Movie Nights

Come watch a movie on courage and vulnerability and stay for a brief discussion afterward.

To Kill a Mockingbird

Friday, March 8 • 7:00 to 9:30 p.m.

The classic movie about integrity standing up for justice, and the unexpected benefits of unusual connections and relationships. Popcorn will be served.

Winter's Bone

Sunday, March 17 • 6:00 to 8:30 p.m.

An unflinching Ozark Mountain girl hacks through dangerous social terrain as she hunts down her drug-dealing father while trying to keep her family intact. Rated R. Come for soup supper after the 4:30 service and stay for the movie!

Finding Your Physical Center

Bryan Kujawski will lead us through martial arts exercises that explore courage and vulnerability in movement. Includes a brief discussion afterward of the meaning of courage and vulnerability.

Saturday, March 9 • 10:00–11:30 a.m.

Meditation/Prayer *Courage and Vulnerability*

Hallman Ministerial Intern Mae Gibson-Wall will lead a directed meditation/prayer session with a focus on courage and vulnerability.

Saturday, March 9 • 10:00–11:30 a.m.

Sing-Along: Songs of Courage

Sing songs of courage with Don Brunquell and Rob Eller-Isaacs. Includes a brief discussion of the meaning of courage and vulnerability.

Wednesday, March 13 • 7:15–8:30 p.m.

Read-Along: Play of Courage

Participate in a play reading organized by Dutton Foster, a longtime theater artist. Dutton will choose an excerpt(s) that particularly illustrates courage and vulnerability, and organize attendees to read parts. Includes a brief discussion afterward of the meaning of courage and vulnerability.

Saturday, March 16 • 10:00–11:30 a.m.

Come to the Pancake Breakfast from 8:30–9:30 a.m. before the read-along!

Young Families Event

Parents and children will explore courage and vulnerability together, with special activities that appeal to young children.

Saturday, March 16 • 10:00–11:30 a.m.

Come to the Pancake Breakfast from 8:30–9:30 a.m. before the discussion!

Book Read

Courage and Vulnerability:

***Life of Pi* by Yann Martel**

"After the sinking of a cargo ship, a solitary lifeboat remains bobbing on the wild blue Pacific. The only survivors are a sixteen-year-old boy named Pi, a hyena, a wounded zebra, an orangutan—and a 450-pound royal Bengal tiger... In rich, hallucinatory passages, Pi recounts the harrowing journey as the days blur together, elegantly cataloging the endless passage of time and his struggles to survive" (amazon.com). Join us for a discussion of this "magical reading experience." Copies of the book will be available for purchase in the Bookstall.

Wednesday, March 20 • 7:15–8:30 p.m.

Open Page Writing Session: *Whole Hearted Community*

Sociologist Brene Brown's research into vulnerability has led her to name those who live with courageous vulnerability as "whole-hearted" people. Drawing from Brown's work as well as many religious teachings, this session invites us to reflect on what whole-heartedness looks and feels like in our personal lives and in our community. This writing session is open to all but is especially tailored for members and friends of Unity Church.

Sunday, March 24 • 1:00–3:00 p.m.

Story Booth

Come to the Charting Our Course Together! table after services on any Sunday during March, pick up a card with one of our four key questions on it, and step into our story booth in the Crothers Room on the upper level to record your answer to it. Or, write your answers to one or more of the questions and drop them in the box at the table.

MINISTERIAL INTERNS

Mae Gibson Wall

2012-13 Hallman Ministerial Intern

It is not uncommon to hear ministers speak of their *call*. I had a call myself, but that's not what I'm going to write about now. What I'm going to write about now is the *knowing* that followed my call.



It was 2009, and I was spending four months in India, at a home for 120 orphaned and destitute children. The small children had all gone to bed, and I was left sitting in the dirt yard of the home with Shanthi, Ashwini, and Rukmini, all women in their late teens. They spoke some English, although it didn't flow easily, and I spoke no Telugu or Hindi. But language was no barrier to our conversation that night. The girls told me their stories with their hands and with their eyes – stories of how they were terrified of marriage, which would certainly be arranged for them one day. Most women they knew suffered abuse by their husbands, and they had deduced that marriage was a thing to be feared.

I had little to say – me with my privileged life and respectful, loving husband. So I just listened. And as it turns out, that's really all they wanted. To be heard and to be known and to have their fears held by someone else alongside them. They cried to me for a long time that night, and I cried with them, and we hugged and loved each other dearly.

I've stayed in touch with these three young women over the past four years, our bond having been cemented that night – the night when my *call* became my *knowing*. It was the first time I felt in my bones what it meant to do ministry, and it was as instinctive to me as breathing.

By the time you read this, Rukmini will be married, her wedding set for Valentine's Day. I write this as I prepare to leave for India in a few short hours. I will be there when she marries, and I will be present to all the emotions running high that day, along with Shanthi and Ashwini. We will listen and cry and celebrate and hug. And we will love each other dearly. And I will be reminded of the work that I know I am called to do in this world.

Mae Gibson Wall can be reached by email at mae@unityunitarian.org and by phone at 651-228-1456 x129.

Jim Foti

2012-13 Ministerial Intern

I'm not qualified to give medical advice, but in the event that you or someone you love ends up in the hospital, here's some spiritual advice: Consider saying "yes" to a visit from a chaplain.



Before I continue, allow me to acknowledge that there have been periods in my life during which I would have said "no way" to a chaplain. But that rejection was not based on any actual knowledge. During my non-religious years, I would've imagined a chaplain to fall somewhere on a continuum between Jerry Falwell and the Father Mulcahy character on the old TV show "MASH."

I finally got to know some real chaplains after I started seminary, and they were nothing like my youthful imaginings. In fact, I am hard-pressed to think of a nicer, more patient, more generous, non-proselytizing group of people than the chaplains I've met.

What do chaplains do? They pray, they listen, and they serve as a non-anxious presence amid the hospital whirlwind and medical uncertainty. They spend time with patients and families of all religious persuasions, regardless of their own denominational affiliation. They help distribute communion and perform baptisms. Some offer comfort through music; some stay overnight so they can be at the hospital for whatever crises arise. Others sit in on morning rounds to get a fuller understanding of what patients are facing – who is alone, who is dying, who is thrilled to be going home.

During my chaplain internship, I tried to explain all this to some of my non-religious friends, and I remember the following exchange between two of them:

"I would never want a chaplain to visit me."

"Well, Jim's a chaplain. Wouldn't you want Jim to visit you?"

"Well, of course I'd want Jim to visit me."

So instead of Jerry Falwell, picture a Unity ministerial intern, because we've all served as chaplains (some still do). And when the day comes, if you don't already have an abundance of visitors to your hospital room, consider saying "yes" to that chaplain at your door.

Jim Foti can be reached by email at jim@unityunitarian.org and by phone at 651-228-1456 x109.

Adult Spiritual Development: World Religions in Practice

Join Unity's ministerial interns, Mae Gibson Wall and Jim Foti, for a practice-based class in world religions. Together, we will explore Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, all through the lens of religious ritual and discipline. We will move beyond an intellectual approach of these faith traditions and into a more embodied understanding of their practice. The class will be offered on Tuesday evenings from 7:00–9:00 p.m. and will run from March 12 through April 23. To register (and to request childcare), email Mae at mae@unityunitarian.org or call 651-228-1456 x129.

Follow-up to "The New Jim Crow"

From Rob Fulton, Anti-Racism Leadership Team

The book read for February has been Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow* in which she describes how a new form of discrimination against African-Americans has been developed out of the War on Drugs. Here are some facts on state incarceration rates and state sentencing guidelines in Minnesota.

1. State corrections facilities (11 total ranging in population from 27 to 2007) hold 9,151 inmates as of January 7, 2013. African-Americans (3,045) make up 33% of this population. In Minnesota, total African-American population is 5.2%.
2. In a report by the Pew Center on the states titled "The Long Reach of American Corrections," they state that Minnesota has 1 in 26 people locked up or on probation or supervised release. This is the fourth highest correctional control rate in the nation.
3. In Minnesota sentencing guidelines for first degree sale of drugs, the amount of crack cocaine required is 10 grams, while the amount of powdered cocaine is 50 grams to constitute this high charge. Crack cocaine is of higher consumption by African-Americans.

Some positive approaches are occurring to deal with the issues of incarceration and correctional control especially for juveniles.

1. Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiatives have significantly reduced the number of juveniles who are incarcerated upon arrest in both Ramsey and Hennepin counties. This effort, funded in part by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, provides for a screening tool to divert juveniles from detention to alternatives pending disposition. In Ramsey County in 2008, 1,654 African-Americans were placed in juvenile detention; in 2011, only 606 were placed. In Hennepin County, the average population of youth in detention has dropped by 58%.
2. Amicus has developed re-entry programs to help persons coming out of prison and juvenile facilities. A Circle of Peace community group meets with juveniles returning to the community at weekly meetings at Unity Church.
3. Save Our Sons is a program that works with at-risk young African-Americans to enter manhood with a sense of pride in their African descent and to appreciate their culture and history. The program is housed on Selby Avenue about six blocks from Unity Church.

What more can we do to dismantle "The New Jim Crow"?

Become a Worship Associate

The Worship Associates Program is accepting applications for a two-year term beginning this spring. Applications are due March 15.

Have you ever wondered what goes into the crafting of a worship service here at Unity Church? Have you ever wished you could collaborate with the ministerial team and other lay leaders in thinking deeply about the role of worship here? If so, please contact Steve Harper by email at Steve.Harper@alumni.macalester.edu for more information or to request an application.

Soup Teams Needed

The weekly Soup Suppers after the 4:30 p.m. service are an important part of building community through our food ministry. Volunteers are needed to help serve the soup supper and clean up after the meal. If you would like to sign up to help on a monthly soup supper team, or to help cook soup on the first Saturday of each month, please email Lisa Friedman at lisa@unityunitarian.org.

Help create the church green space!

The green space next door to the church has been thoughtfully planned with the community, the church, and the children of Religious Education in mind. Now, we need to do the work to make the vision for the space a reality. If you are willing to help in any capacity, please contact Mae Gibson Wall at mae@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x129.

Heart to Heart

A Couples' Enrichment Weekend

Heart to Heart is a program designed to enrich communication and intimacy in your relationship. These retreats have been offered for 18 years. This year's Spring Retreat will be held March 22-24. All couples committed to their partners and to their relationships are welcome—same-sex and opposite-sex, married and unmarried. Space is limited, so register early. This retreat is sponsored by Unity Church. For more information, visit the website at www.hearttoheartmn.org or call Cheri at 612-722-3304.

Whole Farm Co-op Deliveries

Buy meat, cheese, eggs and other local sustainable produce from Whole Farm Coop farms and pick it up in the Unity Church basement each month! Order from www.wholefarmcoop.com or call 1-320-732-3023 by Wednesday, March 13, and orders will be delivered on Wednesday, March 20.



Integrating Your Catholic Heritage

Saturday, March 9 • 9:00 a.m.-noon • Center Room

Everyone who has made the transition from Roman Catholicism to Unitarian Universalism has a story. Join us for a theological, cultural, and interpersonal exploration of the gifts and challenges we bring with us. To register, please contact Ministerial Intern Jim Foti at jim@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x109. Free childcare available by request to christy@unityunitarian.org with at least one week advance notice.

A Conversation on Racial Equity in Hiring

Sunday, March 10 • 1:00-3:00 p.m. • Foote Room

Unity welcomes the spring meeting of the Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance (MUUSJA), and everyone is invited. Unity member Avi Viswanathan will be giving a presentation on the HIRE Minnesota Coalition, which MUUSJA is a part of and which has worked for three years to transform racial equity practices at some of the largest government agencies in the state, including MnDOT and the Met Council. And leaders from Unity will talk about our congregation's use of diversity goals during the *Unity Tomorrow* project and in large vendor contracts going forward. Come learn about how Unity and UUs across the state are influencing these important issues. For more information, contact Ralph Wyman, MUUSJA's director/organizer, at rwmusja@gmail.com or 612-998-6624. Free childcare available by request to christy@unityunitarian.org with at least one week advance notice.

Technology Basics for Grandparents

Sunday, March 17 • 1:00–3:00 p.m. • Center Room

Not long ago, there were only a few ways for families to communicate: speaking in person, talking over a wall-mounted phone, or writing letters on paper. Now there's an overwhelming array of methods, from typing on a mobile phone to video conversations via computer. While many grandparents are using e-mail and cell phones, many others would like to have a better understanding of devices that their kids and grandkids take for granted. Please join us for an intergenerational afternoon of technology basics – we'll explore texting, tablets, iPods, Skype, and more. (And if you don't know what we're talking about, all the more reason to come!) You need not be a grandparent – anyone with curiosity is welcome to attend. Your tour guides will include Kerri Meyer and Drew Danielson of the religious education staff, members of the Tower Club youth group, and Ministerial Intern Jim Foti. To register, please contact Jim at jim@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x109.

Elders Group Gathering

Wednesday, March 20 • 1:00–2:30 p.m. • Center Room

Topic: Keep on Moving (rescheduled from February)

Everyone is welcome at Unity's monthly Elders gatherings! This month we're going to talk about an issue that affects us all: transportation. How can we maintain our ability to drive for as long as possible, and safely? When it comes time to stop driving, how can we remain mobile and avoid isolation in our car-centered culture? We'll hear from Kathy Woods Rakowczyk, an occupational therapist, driver rehabilitation specialist, and licensed driving instructor from the Courage Center. We'll also draw on the experiences of Unity members and get updates on Unity's new Rides Ministry. Our gathering will include time for visiting with friends old and new, and refreshments will be served. For more information about the Elders Group or to offer or inquire about receiving a ride to this event, contact Ministerial Intern Jim Foti at 651-228-1456 x109 or jim@unityunitarian.org.

Committed Couples Class

The path of being in a committed relationship is a demanding path full of all kinds of challenges and opportunities. The goal of the committed couple's class is to enhance relationships no matter what state they are in.

People in a committed partnership sometimes believe that their issues are unique. Often that isn't the case and as couples share, camaraderie and understanding increase.

The committed couple's class is intended to promote healthy and productive conversations about our relationships. Participants are often amazed at how often they laugh at themselves as other couples share the same story.

Committed Couples is a class designed to support all couples who are committed to one another. We cover issues like finances, spirituality, the impact of family of origin issues, parenting, intimacy and conflict. We share and work in small groups and as couples. Each creates a relationship vision together which serves as a foundation for the work we do. If you have questions, please contact Janne at the church office.

Led by Janne and Rob Eller-Isaacs, the Committed Couples class will be held Tuesdays, March 26 through May 7 from 7:00 to 9:15 p.m. Registration is free for pledging members of Unity Church and \$110 for non-pledging friends. To register, please contact Julie Handberg by email at julieh@unityunitarian.org or by phone at 651-228-1456 x110.

Contact Christy Randall by email at christy@unityunitarian.org to request childcare at least one week in advance of the first class.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

Welcome Words

Each Sunday, as I visit with people who are here for the first time, I am reminded of the importance of this religious community which we create together. It matters that our doors are open to all who would enter and be welcomed in the full diversity and richness of our humanity. It matters that our worship and religious education call upon us to go deep into the task of growing our souls and living meaningfully in the world. It matters that we take the time to greet one another and to care for each other in the daily joys and sorrows of our lives. It matters that we are a visible part of the living tradition of liberal religion right here in St. Paul, Minnesota. As we begin this month to envision the next five years here at Unity, know that your presence makes a difference in who we are and who we are becoming. Together, may we continue to build the congregation of our hopes and dreams.



Lisa Friedman
Director of Congregational Life

Lisa • lisa@unityunitarian.org

Pathway to Membership

Unity Church offers three classes for visitors who are exploring Unity as a spiritual home. Sign up at the Welcome Table on Sundays or contact Laney Ohmans at 651-228-1456 or laney@unityunitarian.org. Childcare is available by contacting Christy Randall at 651-228-1456 x127 or christy@unityunitarian.org at least one week in advance. Rev. Lisa Friedman, Director of Congregational Life, is happy to meet with you to answer questions and to welcome you into the congregation. She can be reached at lisa@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x107.

Welcome to Unity: Our Class for Newcomers

Wednesday, March 13 • 7:15–8:30 p.m.

If you have been visiting Unity and would like to find out more about Unitarian Universalism and our congregation, we invite you to join us for a “Welcome to Unity” class.

Finding Yourself at Unity: A Deeper Exploration

Saturday, March 2 • 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m. ~also offered ~ Thursday, April 4, 11, 18 • 6:30–8:30 p.m.

In this class, we will have an opportunity to share part of our religious journey, to take a more in-depth look at the history of Unity Church, to discuss the expectations and benefits of membership, and get to know the programs and ministries of the congregation.

Committing to Unity: Joining Unity Church

Saturday, April 13 • 9:30–11:30 a.m.

This class explores the deeper meanings and expectations of membership and shared ministry. The class will conclude with a ceremony as participants sign the membership book! There will be a New Member recognition ceremony on Sunday, April 14.

Ongoing Groups at Unity Church

These groups are open to all members and friends of Unity Church. If you are looking to connect with a group, please contact the person listed below, or visit the church website at www.unityunitarian.org for meeting information, or call the church office at 651-228-1456.

A New Look at the Bible: Second Thursday of the month (March 14) at 7:00 p.m. Contact: Paul Gade at 651-771-7528.

Afterthoughts: Sundays after the 9:00 a.m. service. Contact: Paul Gade at 651-771-7528 for more information.

Caregivers Group: An informal support group for caregivers. Third Thursday of the month (March 21) from Noon–2:00 p.m. Contact: Janne Eller-Isaacs at janne@unityunitarian.org for more information.

Evergreen Quilters: Second Tuesday of the month (March 12) from 7:00–9:00 p.m. and fourth Saturday of the month (March 23) from 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. Contact: Peggy Wright at 651-698-2760 for more information.

Living With Grief Group: A group for people living with grief and loss. Third Tuesday of the month (March 19) from 7:00–9:00 p.m. Contact: Janne Eller-Isaacs at janne@unityunitarian.org for more information.

Men's Retirement Group: Monday, March 11 and 25, from 1:00–3:00 p.m. Contact: Phil Morton at 952-934-3578 for more information.

Unitots! A playgroup for families (parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles) with kids through preschool age. Every Monday and Thursday, from 9:30 a.m.–noon, in the nursery. Contact Christy Randall at christy@unityunitarian.org for more information.

Unity Book Club: Second Tuesday of the month (March 12) from 7:00–8:30 p.m. The book they will be discussing is *In the Lake of the Woods* by Tim O'Brien. Contact Jack Hawthorne at jack.hawthorne@comcast.net for more information.

Unity Bridge Club: Friday, March 1, at 7:00 p.m. Contact: Priscilla Swartz at 651-454-3209.

Zen Meditation: Find renewal and grounding. Tuesdays from 5:30 - 6:30 p.m., in the Ames Chapel. Contact Ken Ford at kford5@comcast.net.

Scan the codes below with your smart phone to find us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter!



WELLSPRING WEDNESDAY

Wellspring Wednesday is a multi-generational opportunity to gather together midweek at church for food, fellowship, and fun. Dinner begins at 6:00 p.m., followed by worship at 6:45 p.m., and an evening of rich programming beginning at 7:10 p.m. All are welcome. Childcare is available and you do not have to sign up in advance.

Dinner: The cost for dinner is: \$7/adult, \$4/child ages 5 to 12, \$2/child ages 2 to 4, and \$20/family, and can be paid by cash or check. (Children under the age of 24 months are free.) Reservations for dinner are not required. Financial assistance is available to cover the cost of dinners; contact Lisa Friedman by e-mail at lisa@unityunitarian.org or by phone at 651-228-1456 x107.

Many of the Wellspring Wednesday offerings during the month of March relate directly to the Ends conversation, Charting Our Course Together! Please turn to page 5 for more information about how to participate in the conversation.

March 6

Affordable Housing Ministry Team: Homeless Youth Act

On any given night an estimated 2,500 unaccompanied youth are homeless in Minnesota. Youth who are homeless are the hardest to find shelter for as there is a critical shortage of shelter beds and supportive housing equipped to address the unique needs that unaccompanied youth face.

The PORTICO Interfaith Housing Collaborative, with the support of over 50 congregations in St. Paul, including Unity Church, is fighting for an \$8 million increase for the Homeless Youth Act. Services required include street outreach, emergency shelter, supportive housing, and family reunification, among others, to prevent youth from falling into long-term homelessness and its more serious health and social consequences.

This presentation will be a panel that includes Michael Dahl, Advocacy Coordinator at PORTICO, a Wilder Foundation staff member and formerly homeless youth. Come learn about this campaign and take action for homeless youth.

Charting Our Course Together: Facilitated Ends Discussion

Gather with others to consider the role courage and vulnerability have played in your life and what we could imagine being courageous about together as a church in the future.

Religious Education New Family Orientation

P90X Workout

Join P90X certified instructor and church member Jason Lien for a 60-minute P90X workout that includes stretching, yoga, cardio and core strengthening. Bring a mat, water bottle, and towel.

March 13

Dinner: Irish hand pies (beef or veg), salad, dessert

Welcome to Unity

If you would like to find out more about Unitarian Universalism and Unity Church, join us for a *Welcome to Unity* class.

Charting Our Course Together: Songs of Courage

Sing songs of courage with Don Brunquell and Rob Eller-Isaacs. Includes a brief discussion of the meaning of courage and vulnerability.

Charting Our Course Together: Facilitated Ends Discussion

Gather with others to consider the role courage and vulnerability have played in your life and what we could imagine being courageous about together as a church in the future.

P90X Workout

March 20:

Equinox meal: vegetable apple salad, with an equinox feast bar of toppings from ancient celebrations: hard boiled eggs, pistachios, herbs and rice. Hot cross buns for dessert!

Spring Equinox Celebration

A family-friendly, Persian- and Celtic-inspired ritual to mark the turning of the year as the growing light and dark come into balance and the seasons continue their cycle. This ritual will include song, dance, meditation, and a story for the kids.

Charting Our Course Together! Book Discussion

***Life of Pi* by Yann Martel**

"After the sinking of a cargo ship, a solitary lifeboat remains bobbing on the wild blue Pacific. The only survivors are a sixteen-year-old boy named Pi, a hyena, a wounded zebra, an orangutan—and a 450-pound royal Bengal tiger... In rich, hallucinatory passages, Pi recounts the harrowing journey as the days blur together, elegantly cataloging the endless passage of time and his struggles to survive" (amazon.com). Join us for a discussion of this "magical reading experience." Copies of the book will be available for purchase in the Bookstall.

Facilitated Ends Discussion

Gather with others to consider the role courage and vulnerability have played in your life and what we could imagine being courageous about together as a church in the future.

P90X Workout

March 27

Unitarian and Universalist Women Pioneers

Throughout our history, Unitarian and Universalist women have played key roles in shaping our vision of ministry and our faith. Until recently, many of their stories were not well known. Lisa Friedman and Terri Burnor will introduce you to some of these fascinating leaders and talk about what we can learn from them today.

P90X Workout

commUNITY is the newsletter of Unity Church—Unitarian. It is published monthly, except the month of July. 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 per year.

Unity Church—Unitarian
733 Portland Avenue • Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104
651-228-1456 • www.unityunitarian.org

OPEN PAGE WRITING SESSIONS / LIBRARIES & BOOKSTALL

Open Page Writing Sessions

Led by Consulting Literary Minister Karen Hering, Open Page writing sessions are opportunities to correspond with the "still, small voice within." Using stories, poetry, images and objects as well as wisdom from religious teachings, science and history, participants reflect on the month's theme in their own words and on their own pages. No writing experience is necessary.

Sunday, March 17 • 2:00–4:00 p.m.

Reflection Topic: Sin

Unity Church–Unitarian

Free; RSVP karen@unityunitarian.org

Sin is a thorny topic for religious liberals, so we often avoid it, instead emphasizing our more positive human potential. But as theologian James Luther Adams pointed out, this ostrich method isn't very helpful. In this session, we'll pull our heads from the sand to consider what sin is, including the biblical definition of sin as a "hardened heart." What hardens our hearts today? How might we keep our hearts open to the world around us?

Sunday, March 24 • 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Reflection Topic: Whole-Hearted Community

Unity Church–Unitarian

Free; RSVP karen@unityunitarian.org

Sociologist Brene Brown's research into vulnerability has led her to name those who live with courageous vulnerability as "whole-hearted" people. Drawing from Brown's work as well as many religious teachings, this session invites us to reflect on what whole-heartedness looks and feels like in our personal lives and in our community. This writing session is open to all but is especially tailored for members and friends of Unity Church to deepen your reflection on the church's current discussion of courage and vulnerability in our congregational life and ministries.

Other Literary Programming

For more information about additional writing programs offered in other locations, visit www.unityunitarian.org/literary-ministry.html, or to receive periodic e-mail notifications of Karen's upcoming literary programs at Unity Church and elsewhere, contact karen@unityunitarian.org.

What's this?
Scan it with your
smart phone
to find out!

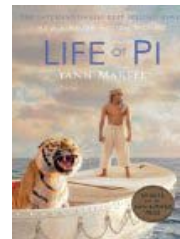
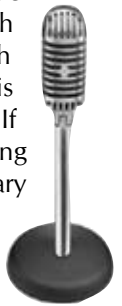


What's New in the Library and Bookstall!

From Shelley Butler, Library and Bookstall Team

The fabulous 5th Annual Café Unity is calling you!

Singers, musicians, writers, storytellers, poets—Café Unity is a chance to share your gifts and talents with Unity on a special Friday night when the Parish Hall is turned into a warm coffeehouse. The event is always free (including refreshments and libations). If you would be interested in performing or in planning Café Unity, please contact Shelley and the Library and Bookstall Team: library@unityunitarian.org. Space in the lineup is limited so contact us soon. Mark Your Calendars for Friday, April 12!



The Life of Pi by Yann Martel

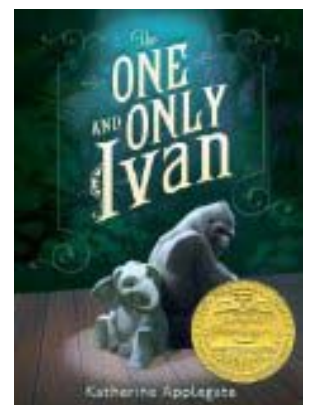
Find this award-winning, intriguing novel in the Bookstall and Anderson Library now; discuss it at Wellspring Wednesday, March 20, at 7:15 p.m.

The Piano Feature

Have you noticed the grand piano that is in the Unity Bookstall on Sundays? It has a protective cover on it which might lead you to believe that the piano is just being stored there, but no, it is an integral part of the Bookstall where special books of note are placed to grab your attention. This display is affectionately known as "The Piano Feature." Check out the current Piano Feature on Sunday mornings in the Bookstall.

How do you spell "Welcome?"

Find out in the Unity Children's Library in the lower level of the Eliot Wing where the inviting space and friendly volunteers will show you just how welcoming a library can be. Just in: the 2013 Newbery Medal and Caldecott Medal winners. This year's choice for the most outstanding contribution to children's literature is *The One and Only Ivan* by Katherine Applegate, a children's novel about a gorilla living at the Exit 8 Big Top Mall and Video Arcade, and how friendship and art change his life. The 2013 most distinguished American picture book for children is *This Is Not My Hat*, illustrated and written by Jon Klassen, a story with humor and possible consequences for a little fish who steals a hat.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

Partner Church Spring Plant Sale

From Sharon Merritt, Partner Church Ministry Team

Partner Church Spring Plant Sale: March 3, 10, and 17
Plant Pickup in the Parish Hall on Palm Sunday, March 24

This month the Partner Church Team will hold the tenth annual Spring Plant Sale to raise funds in support of our friends, the Unitarian villagers in Homorodszentpeter, Transylvania, Romania.



As you begin to celebrate the change of seasons by ordering lovely flowering plants on March 3, 10, and 17, to be taken home on Palm Sunday, know that you are

helping support our rich, reciprocal friendship with Unitarians whose amazing determination and commitment have kept their faith vibrant since the 16th Century!

Many American Unitarian Universalist churches have developed partnerships with Transylvanian Unitarian churches since 1989 when Romanians opened their country to foreign contacts after overthrowing the dictator Ceaucescu. Long before that, the first Unitarian King of Transylvania (now part of Romania), John Sigismund, had proclaimed freedom of religion in 1568 (as long as one was Unitarian, Lutheran, Catholic, or Calvinist), so the roots of our church are long and deep in Europe. The history is complicated by changed political borders and leaders throughout the years, but the Transylvanian Unitarians' belief in a personal relationship with one God (not a god in three parts), and in following Jesus' teachings, but not worshipping him as superhuman, ring true to many American Unitarians.

Unity's partner church relationship has been especially long and warm. It began in the early 1990's with visits to Szentpeter by Phyllis Jean Jones, Ruth Stryker-Gordon and Ken Gordon. With deep gratitude to Unity members Tibor and Olga Zoltai, who grew up in Hungary, we have been able to communicate directly with the Unitarian villagers in their own language because they are ethnically Hungarian.

Over the years, Unity Church, along with other supportive organizations, has been able to help fund the villagers' projects to build a parsonage, set up a medical clinic, revamp the school's heating system, and buy a much-needed van.

Unity has also encouraged visits between the two congregations. To date, over sixty Unity members have gone on eye- and heart-opening pilgrimages to Homorodszentpeter and to historical Unitarian sites in Romania. And, because we want to share our lives with the villagers as they have shared theirs with us, the Partner Church team has raised travel funds so that at least eleven villagers have come to St. Paul. You may remember that most recently, Kinga-Reka Szekeley, minister of the Homorodszentpeter church, and her husband, Csaba, spent a busy, thought-provoking week here with us. We learn so much from each other through this ongoing relationship!

What is the Rainbow Chalice Alliance?

From Ellen Merlin, Rainbow Chalice Alliance Ministry Team

So maybe you noticed rainbow flags for sale last year, or last month's pie sale in the Parish Hall after church. Did you wonder who's doing the selling and for what purpose? The Rainbow Chalice Alliance (RCA), one of Unity's community outreach teams, is the culprit, fundraising in support of LGBTQ youth, and their involvement in a variety of events happening in the metro area. Some of these events have included: Queer Prom; Q-Quest – an educational day for LGBTQ youth; Youth Pride; and the Pride Parade. These events are an important step in helping foster a sense of community and acceptance for LGBTQ youth.

So, as you can see, the RCA is dedicated to actively supporting LGBTQ youth, within, and especially outside our church community who lack the support they need to flourish. We have community partnerships with the Minnesota School Outreach Coalition (MNSOC) and the Saint Paul Public Schools' Out for Equity Program. The RCA also sponsored Unity's participation in the Freedom to Marry rally at the capital on February 14 and we sponsored a Wellspring Wednesday showing of *Minnesota Nice?* a video documentary on bullying in Minnesota schools, by Alec Fischer, graduate of Edina High School's Class of 2012. (If you missed it, this film is available on YouTube, and provides powerful information in support of the movement to end bullying in our schools, as well as valuable insights into suicide prevention.)

I chose to become a member of the RCA because, as a parent, and a school counselor, I am reminded almost daily of the struggles our youth face. LGBTQ youth find these struggles magnified, as they navigate a world in which not all people accept them, and they often lack strong role models to help them find their way. LGBTQ youth are much more likely to have issues with chemical abuse, emotional abuse and even homelessness. They are much more often the target of bullying, or other physical or sexual abuse than other teens, and may be at greater risk of suicidal ideations. As we listen to all the stories and discussions coming from activities at the legislature, I can't help but feel concern for the possible fallout on our youth. How do these discussions feel to them, and what does it tell them about their future? If you don't feel fully informed, I challenge you to learn more.

The time is at hand to stand up for social justice for all, and maintain a united front in the efforts to recognize the inherent worth of *all* people. And please know, the RCA is happy to welcome new members willing to make at least a two year commitment to this outreach team. Contact Ellen Merlin at ellen.merlin@gmail.com, Laura Schlatter at laurasueschlatter@gmail.com or Pat Haff at pat@unityunitarian.org for more information.

RIDES MINISTRY / PROJECT HOME UPDATE

Rides Ministry Update

From Jim Foti, Ministerial Intern

As of this writing, more than 50 people have signed up to offer rides to Sunday worship as part of Unity's new Rides Ministry. Drivers for all three services and from a variety of ZIP codes, from Forest Lake to Woodbury to Eagan) have put themselves on the map as volunteer drivers, and we are ever so grateful!

We also have about a half-dozen people who have expressed an interest in receiving a ride, either because they don't have a car or aren't able to drive themselves, and I expect that number to grow now that we have dozens of drivers ready to help out. (I should also mention that we can't ever have too many drivers – the more we have, the easier it will be to find drivers and passengers who live near each other and to offer more frequent rides.)

We have sufficient drivers to give this a try starting this month. Here's how it will work:

- A congregant who needs a ride will call the church and give his or her name, address, and preferred service time (9, 11, or 4:30). Ride requests ideally should be called in by the end of the day Wednesday to allow time for a ride match to be found.
- The phone desk volunteer will look at the Google map and see who lives near the congregant requesting the ride.
- The volunteer will call the closest potential driver and see whether he/she is available for the coming Sunday. If so, the volunteer will give the two parties each others' phone numbers to work out exact details (pick-up time, etc.).
- If that driver is not available, the driver simply says no for that week, and the volunteer checks the map for the next-closest possible driver.
- If a driver is available to give a one-way ride, the volunteer will look on the map for someone to give a ride for the other leg of the round-trip.

The idea is to provide flexibility for the drivers, who, like many people, have varying schedules.

One of the longer-term goals is to have rides available for other church events during the week. Another eventual goal is to use the map to help match up congregants for general carpooling. But for now, because this is a new ministry, the plan is to focus on Sunday worship.

So if you'd like to be involved as either a driver or a passenger, call the main church number, 651-228-1456, and put yourself on the map!

And feel free to contact me with any questions at jim@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x109.

Project Home Update

Where can a family go when they lose their home and shelters are full?

Into the welcoming arms of local congregations.

Unity Church is one of many congregations participating in Project Home, organized by the Saint Paul Area Council of Churches to provide emergency housing for families. Volunteer hosts make guests feel welcome by serving healthy food, playing with the children and supporting parents. There are evening and overnight hosting opportunities.

Unity will be a host site in May, and our Project Home leadership team is organizing to recruit and train volunteers. Anyone interested in helping us plan is welcome.

Unity Church has also partnered with other congregations by helping to host in each other's facility. One such partner congregation is Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, just a few blocks north on Dale. They are a small congregation and rely on other congregations to help them host. Unity's Project Home Team would like to supply hosts for 20 hosting slots at Lutheran Church of the Redeemer during the month of March, and in return members of their congregation will help us in May. If you can help in this way you may sign up online at <http://bit.ly/WSi9wb>. The church offers a short orientation to their site at 11:30 a.m. on March 3, 10, and 17 to help volunteers know where supplies are located and what to do when they get there.

Contact Anna Newton at 651-483-2986 or newtona@comcast.net for more information on any of these volunteer opportunities.

Rides Ministry Map

On the Rides Ministry map, cars represent congregants who have offered to provide rides, while each pin represents someone in need of a ride. The sun symbol marks Unity's location.



SPRING EQUINOX REFLECTION / PARISH HALL ARTISTS



Spring Equinox Reflection

The spring equinox occurs midway between the longest night of the year, at winter solstice, and the longest day of the year, at summer solstice. It is called an equinox from the Latin “equal” and “night,” but in reality, the equality of day and night is only approximate and depends on your geographic location! In 2013, the spring equinox occurs at 6:02 a.m. Central Time on March 20.

Following on winter’s long, cold, inward time, it is natural for us to be ready for the new life and new beginnings which spring equinox promises. Many cultures celebrate the spring equinox, which often has a connotation of beginning a new year or cycle, with celebrations such as Nowruz (Zoroastrians, Ba’hai and Persians) and Ostara (Celtic, Wiccan, and NeoPaganism). Here in Minnesota, we usually have to wait a little longer to see much physical evidence, but around this time, winter’s grasp does begin to noticeably lessen as breezes begin to warm, snow melts more quickly, migrating birds begin to return, and early bulbs may even start poking up through the slowly warming earth.

Spring invites us to remember the natural rhythm of the seasons—it’s time, once again, to surge forth into fresh, new life, to open to a new cycle of growth, opportunity, and fortune. And yet, we can also keep in mind what the equinox represents—just enough balance of day and night, dark and light. We can take a lesson from the plants that will soon emerge—even as the light beckons them to green again, their roots reach down into the dark, fertile earth for its support. Can we keep our feet firmly planted in the dark ground of inner support that wintertime has taught us while we reach into the excitement and possibility of spring?

One common springtime practice for opening to the newness and freshness is spring cleaning. This can take many forms—cleaning and decluttering your home, your garden, your relationships, your soul... However you do it, I suggest it not be about banishing anything from your life, but instead about mindfully choosing life-affirming practices that could help you to live your life more fully. What could you choose to cleanse or enter into this spring that will help you to open to new possibilities and growth? What will support your soul so that more of you can awaken to the possibility of new life? You may want to write in a journal, or try a short ritual alone or with friends that could include the following:

- Light a candle, yellow or light green in color;
- Place a living plant near the candle and meditate on the balance of root support and outer growth needed for this plant to thrive, sensing your own internal rootedness.
- When you are ready, breathe in one life-affirming quality or practice you might like to take on this Spring, and breathe out its opposite (don’t overthink this, whatever arises is fine). Do this for awhile until nothing new arises.
- Sit quietly, breathing at your own pace, with the living flame of the candle and the living essence of the plant, breathing into your own living, growing soul.
- When you are ready, say thank you and blow out the candle.

After the spring equinox, the days continue to grow longer, until at summer solstice, we’ll be back to the longest day. Please plan to join us for our Spring Equinox Celebration at Unity Church this year on March 20! May you welcome and find grace in this changing of the seasons.

—Spring Blessings,
Katy Taylor, Seasonal Coordinator Worship Associate
katy@thewingedheart.net

March Parish Hall Artists

Icons of the Natural World

Influenced by Russian, medieval and Mexican icons, our works reflect the belief that all life is sacred. Using elements taken from the icon tradition, we are exploring the sacredness of the natural world.

Ann Larson

In my *Elements as Martyrs* series, done in oil on recycled hardwood shelving with copper flashing frames, I am influenced by Russian and Mexican icons. The four elements, earth, air, fire and water are depicted in their destruction as martyrs. *The Last Harvest* — oil on recycled cutting board, shows the Last Supper with tomatoes as the participants, the center tomato, cut, sacrificed on the cutting board, for our (humans) benefit. *Saint Bee* — oil on recycled shelving with tooled metal frame, is a tribute to the honey bee which is so important to our food production needs and yet is endangered by our reckless use of chemicals. *King Corn* — oil on wood ironing board, inspired by Michael Pollan’s book, *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*.

Robyn Beth Priestley

In these pieces, I am elevating common or misunderstood creatures through presenting them as sacred objects, and a part of nature. The portraits are influenced by icons, Japanese prints and Art Deco painting. The pieces are mixed media: hand-painted, hand-cut and hand-printed block prints, which are mounted on wooden panels and then overpainted with acrylics, layered with metallic leaf and found objects, making each an original work. The technique also harkens back to traditional Russian and Medieval icons, which were usually painted on wood, and where sometimes only the face was painted in full color.

MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH / MUSIC MINISTRY

The Return of CHALICE CAMP

Unity Church will once again offer two separate weeks of summer day camp! Share in summer fun and Unitarian Universalist values with Unity friends entering grades 1-6. Our camps run Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily. The programming for weeks 1 and 2 will not overlap completely, so sign your camper up for one week or both weeks! Registration is entirely online this year and can be found at www.unityunitarian.org/chalice-camp.html

Chalice Camp Week 1: June 24-28

Chalice Camp Week 2: July 8-12

Youth in grades 8-12 are invited to apply online for Junior Counselor positions (unpaid) and Senior Counselor positions (paid).



March 2013

Notes for your family's calendar:

Sunday, March 3 — regular R.E., Celebration of New Lives (RSVP required)

Wednesday, March 6 — Tween Youth group, 7:10 p.m.

Sunday, March 10 — regular R.E., *Daylight Savings Time → spring ahead!*

Wednesday, March 13 — Tween Youth Group, 7:10 p.m.

Sunday, March 17 — regular R.E.

Wednesday, March 20 — Tween Youth group, 7:10 p.m.

Friday, March 22 — Teachers' Night Out (RSVP required, must be a current R.E. teacher)

Sunday, March 24 — No R.E. classes – Special activities for kids (Spring Break)

Sunday, March 31 — Family Sunday; Easter

Now Accepting Book Sale Donations!

You've been sitting on that pile of already-read books since last April! Bring them to church to donate them to this year's High School Youth Book Sale (April 13 and 14). Leave books (in boxes or sturdy bags, please) in the R.E. office.

Music Notes

From Ruth Palmer

Director of Music Ministry

If what is seen and experienced is portrayed in the language of logic, we are engaged in science. If it is communicated through forms whose connections are not accessible to the conscious mind but are recognized intuitively as meaningful, then we are engaged in art. — Albert Einstein

As we enter this month which deals with the complexities of thinking around the idea of sin, it strikes me to listen as simply as possible to what my own expectations are and to listen deeply to that "intuitive bell" which tells me when and where to pay attention, to listen honestly. Often, it is through the non-verbal that I find this, in all forms of art, in varied expressions.

In music, I find that this wonderful art always challenges us to reach deeper and to experience our journey with questioning, joy and lightness of heart; with infinite applications of spirit, thought and emotion. I truly believe that artistic participation at any level of experience or ability offers the same return. It is the striving for something better that matters — that fulfills us.

Find a moment, find a song, find any piece of music and just... listen.

Donuts, Monkeys, Sprinkles, and a Scarf

The 24th Annual Unity Church Children's Musical

Thursday, February 28 • 7:00 p.m.

Friday, March 1 • 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, March 2 • 5:00 p.m.

Tickets are \$6 for adults, \$4 for children or \$20 for families. Tickets will be sold in the Parish Hall after services during February, as well as before the performances.



UNITY CHURCH-UNITARIAN

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Spring Equinox Celebration

Wednesday, March 20 • 7:15 p.m.
Ames Chapel

Come join us for a family-friendly, Persian- and Celtic-inspired ritual to mark the turning of the year as the growing light and dark come into balance and the seasons continue their cycle. This participatory ritual will include song, dance, meditation, and a story for the kids. If you have any questions, please contact Katy at katy@thewingedheart.net or 651-291-8551.



Maundy Thursday Communion Service

Thursday, March 28
7:00 p.m.
Ames Chapel

Unitarians and Universalists have long celebrated the Eucharistic meal with integrity, even as our theology has evolved over the centuries. Sharing in the breaking of bread and the passing of the cup is a meaningful way to connect our modern liberal practices around Easter with our Unitarian Universalist heritage and Judeo-Christian roots.

Join our ministers and Director of Religious Education in commemorating the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth in an intimate service that includes the washing of feet and the celebration of communion in the memorialist tradition. Worship at 7:00 p.m. in the Ames Chapel. Childcare will be provided.



Prairie Star District Annual Conference 2013

Inspire the Future We Envision

Cedar Rapids, Iowa

April 5-7, 2013

The PSD Annual Conference is a weekend of lectures, workshops, worship, networking, and fellowship. Information on schedule, registration, workshops, and other details is available at <http://www.psduua.org/AnnualConference2013>

