



**Donna Larkin Mohr**  
*President,  
Board of Trustees*

The topic for our May newsletter reflections is the proposed 8th Principle of Unitarian Universalism, which states:

*“We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.”*

More information and background can be found on the [8th Principle website](#), which has been excerpted/quoted here.

“For people identified as white, it is too easy to ignore [racial] issues, which is exactly what keeps the system of racism in our society alive” and well. “We need to de-center whiteness and other dominant cultures in Unitarian Universalism.”

“The 8th Principle came from a feeling that we need something to renew our commitment to this work, to hold ourselves accountable, and to fulfill the potential of our existing principles. Police violence against people of color, recent Supreme Court decisions, and the election of [the 45th president] with advisors and followers... openly supporting white supremacists shows that the country is moving... in the wrong direction.” While we have high hopes for the 46th president, we need to take strong leadership to reverse these trends.

UUs did well during the Civil Rights Movement, and we should be proud of that. “In the late 60s, a promising movement was supported by the UUA, then defunded because of a financial crisis... after which many African Americans left the UUA. There was a long period of silence until the late 80s” when progress was made, “but we have regressed, leading to a UUA President resigning over hiring inclusivity issues.”

In our nation, “racism stands out. The two worst crises of the UUA were both related to race.... The UUA has done well with women becoming ministers and leaders.... The LGBTQIA+ community is well-represented as members, ministers, RE staff, and other leadership positions.”

“The UUA, [our nation], and the world also have a lot of problems deeply based in economic class oppression...; this Principle includes that, but is not highlighting it. Beloved Community happens when people of diverse racial, ethnic, educational, class, gender, and sexual orientation backgrounds/identities come together in an interdependent relationship of love, mutual respect, and care that seeks to realize justice within the community and in the broader world.”

“The UU Principles were designed to be dynamic, not a fixed creed.” Remember, when environmental awareness reached a critical mass, we added a 7th Principle. “We are approaching a similar critical-mass level of awareness with the systemic nature of racism and other oppressions.”

“None of the other Principles mentions love. Having the words “Beloved Community” in the 8th Principle brings our commitment to love higher in our consciousness.”

“The 8th Principle is really just the beginning of action... It should lead to restoring funding and support for anti-racism trainings... as well as starting an anti-racism version of the Welcoming Congregation program that was so effective for LGBTQIA+ awareness and progress.”

“Many people of color have been attracted by the values and potential of UUism, but their souls have been repeatedly wounded by its whiteness. Let us make our actions match our values. Let us be a UU movement that feeds them, which will lead to spiritual wholeness.”

Yours in faith,

Donna

The Humanists of BUC present  
**Prof. Bruce Pollack-Johnson**  
 co-author of the 8th Principle

Sunday, May 9 | 7:00 pm | Zoom

Learn about the 8th Principle from Professor Bruce Pollack-Johnson, one of its co-authors. Prof. Pollack-Johnson will be giving a talk entitled “The Proposed 8th Principle” at a special meeting of the Humanists of BUC on Sunday, May 9 at 7:00 pm. Zoom access info is on the [calendar](#) and on the events page at the end of this newsletter.

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**Abha Dearing**  
*Co-Director of Music Ministry*

It’s about time. I am smug and harrumphing that we are finally embracing the 8th Principle, which will go far beyond what our 1st Principle attempts to do.

1st Principle: The inherent worth and dignity of every person.

8th Principle: Journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppression in ourselves and our institutions.

It’s not as “roll off the tongue” as Principle 1, but neither is dismantling racism easy to say or do. Neither is being uncomfortable with my own privilege, or hearing the painful stories of my siblings of color who have endured blatant or implicit cruel bias, nor is it easy for me to tell parts of my own story.

I am excited that we are seriously discussing this must-do (in my book) action of adopting the 8th Principle, because we are supposed to be the faith leaders in situations like these. UUs are supposed to be pioneers and models for how other faiths should act. But are we?

Looking inward is hard. Being introspective and self-scrutinizing is a skill when it is done while preserving the core of goodness within. Self-flagellation without redemption is meaningless. Can we reflect and actively challenge ourselves at BUC? Are we willing to be uncomfortable, ugly, scared, and guilty? I believe we can.

I love making music with you, with Steve, and for you. I especially love taking on a piece that challenges me to represent a point of view that is not my own. It raises my empathy.

I know I’m preaching to the choir, but that’s what we need more of in our world: empathy. And BUC is full of incredibly empathetic, caring, inspiring people who get stuff done. I think we are ready for this new chapter and I look forward to where it takes our faith, our culture, and our species.



**Steven Dearing**  
*Co-Director of Music Ministry*

Adding another principle to our tradition is a monumental undertaking. I can see the argument that the other principles cover some of the sentiment that is laid out in the proposed 8th Principle, but I also feel that devoting a portion of our covenant solely to diversity and anti-racism is important.

From the beginning of SoundBites, our concert series at BUC, I aimed to present musical talent that displays cultures from around the world. As the series was required to pause during the pandemic, I have heard from a few BUCers who attended a past SoundBites show, saying how much they learned from attending concerts like these, especially in their own sanctuary.

I have always believed that we are better humans when we stretch outside our comfort zones, taking in as much of a culture that we are not part of whenever the opportunity presents itself. If more was done to include diversity training, I firmly believe that racism would diminish. If racism is based in ignorance and fear, curricula steeped in cultural awareness, taught at a young age,

could change inherited patterns of biases and prejudices.

I am very fortunate to have been fostered in curiosity and encouraged to travel and stretch beyond what I think is true. Our best chance for the world to be a better place is through our youth, and I hope that all youth will be encouraged to learn to love all of humanity.



**Joanne Copeland**  
*Bookkeeper*

The 8th Principle was new to me, even though there has been a lot of work on it for several years. It was interesting to read the history of it at the website ([8thprincipleuu.org](http://8thprincipleuu.org)). When we received our assignment for the May newsletter, Nico was kind enough to send us information, videos, and articles about the process. I am pleased that our GUUSH youth are currently involved in learning the process of adopting another Principle. Perhaps we can follow their example someday.

A couple lines stood out for me in on the website: "...we need something to renew our commitment to de-center whiteness and other dominant cultures in UUism, to hold ourselves accountable and to fulfill potential of our existing Principles." I thought,

"yes," and now would be the best time to join the ranks of other congregations who have adopted the 8th Principle.



**Nico Van Ostrand**  
*Religious Education Coordinator*

This month, we're tasked with writing about the proposed 8th Principle. I hope this Principle will soon move from "proposed" to "officially adopted" as part of our UU covenant, but there is lots of groundwork to do first.

During each class, our RE kids and youth review the covenant they created at the beginning of the year. We do this because covenants are living documents, designed to be added to or altered as things come up. Usually, these are minor changes, as we forgot something while creating the original draft... but one time, a group had an issue and decided the next week that they needed to add the very specific line "give new kids a turn with the dog stuffie" to rectify it.

In crafting these covenants, we emphasize naming things we should do, rather than listing all the stuff we shouldn't do.

We encourage the kids and youth to think about how we want to act and treat each other during RE. You'll notice there is no requirement for wordsmithing or proper grammar. This once led to a covenant that included (among other things): be kind, be kind to each other, be kind to everyone, and treat everyone with kindness.

I share these examples because two of the more insidious ways white supremacy culture sneaks into conversations about the 8th Principle are 1) an insistence that we don't need it, and 2) fixation on grammar/wording.

The 8th Principle was written precisely because we as UUs had failed to live up to the fully equitable and welcoming religion we have the potential to be. Just as that class needed a specific line about the puppy stuffed animal, UUism needs this Principle. Affirming the Principle also affirms the incredible anti-oppression work that has also been part of UU faith from the beginning. This story—of failure and of justice—is part of who we are, and this Principle is part of who we're aspiring to be.

I don't believe that critiques of the wording are valid arguments against something as powerful as the 8th Principle. Others have written extensively on why prioritizing grammar is problematic; for me, the message and ideals behind this Principle mean more than any issues about its wording ever could. Similarly—the kids who repeated variations of "be kind" in their covenant did so because they wanted to be sure that everyone knew how important kindness was to their group.

I'll close with a note of hope. Our own high school youth learned the history of the 8th Principle and talked about ways they could live it out. As I write this, they have not yet voted on it, and I'll leave the details for them to tell. But I am extremely proud of their initiative, and grateful for their example.



**Valerie Phillips**  
Administrator

In my reading while exploring the proposed 8th Principle, I discovered that the UU Principles are a living document. The principles are a guide for those who choose to join and participate in UU religious communities. There are bylaws that require a reexamination of the principles at least every 15 years. There have been additions and modifications since the original 6 principles were created in 1961.

Just like the UU Principles are a living document that evolves and changes, we should individually, as well. The 8th Principle summarizes that we need to renew our commitment to anti-oppression and anti-racism, to hold ourselves accountable, and to fulfill the potential of our existing principles. I've seen social media posts from outside the UU world that reflect this concept, with different wording. Unfortunately, I couldn't identify where this quote originated from, but I do feel it's a positive message: "No matter how open-minded, socially conscious, anti-racist I think I am, I still have old, learned, hidden biases that I need to examine. It is my responsibility to check

myself daily for my stereotypes, prejudice, and ultimately, discrimination." - Unknown

Both the 8th Principle and this quote really helped me to become aware of how racist comments and ideas that I heard as a kid still exist in my mind. They were things that were said that were either accepted or deemed okay to say in certain company. I didn't believe those comments then or now, and I would never repeat any of them. However, the 8th Principle helped make it clear to me that as long as these echoes still exist, there is work to be done, and we need to keep fighting for our BIPOC family. Keep fighting oppression and racism over and over until the echoes are not the cruel, racist comments of the past, but are of love and hope for all.

I am only one,  
But still I am one.  
I cannot do everything,  
But still I can do something;  
And because I cannot do everything,  
I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.  
– Edward Everett Hale



**Marcia Mahood**  
*Rental Coordinator*

The Unitarian Universalist tradition of being at the forefront of social change is a long, historic one. Having grown up in the UU tradition, I have always been proud of the work of our fellow UUs. The long tradition of anti-slavery, women's suffrage, and civil rights work creates a long road of activism and change throughout our history. More recently, work in the 1970s on feminism and later on LGBTQ+ rights has put our denomination and BUC at the leading edge of progressive movements.

Several years ago, I visited the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg, Manitoba. I was surprised to see a familiar name: Rev. Norman Naylor, who was the Unitarian minister of my aunt and uncle's church. I had forgotten that he had officiated the first gay marriage in Canada in 1974, and was pleased to see him

and the couple he historically united in marriage recognized in this prestigious museum.

It was a trying month while we awaited the verdict in the trial of former police officer Derek Chauvin for the murder of George Floyd. I watched the video of Mr. Floyd's death, and realized I had never seen anyone die before my eyes. Like the shocking death of Emmett Till, this was another historical turning point. It was stunning, and the truth of that video meant that there could be no more obfuscation of what truly happened. Calls to end systemic racism have been an outcome of Mr. Floyd's death. How can we as UUs respond in this moment?

And now, the 8th Principle is being considered for adoption by many UU congregations. What does the principle say?

“We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.”

Read this principle again. It is very clever and well-thought-out, as it directs people to look within, at ourselves. And ultimately, isn't that what needs to happen to work toward the dismantling of racism?

This is another opportunity to move our congregation forward to the forefront of social change by actively examining white privilege. There is so much we can learn from these actions. By openly embracing the dismantling of racism within ourselves and within our congregation, we can once again, as Gandhi said, “Be the change.”



**Sara Constantakis**  
*Communications Coordinator*

“Transform yourself to transform the world.” —Grace Lee Boggs

In a recent staff meeting, during the opening reading and check-in, we talked about what we are letting go of during this time of upheaval on many fronts in our world. I shared that I have been thinking about that question in an expanded way: what can be let go, what can be kept, and what can be transformed. Our UU Principles fall into that last category: they are something we can transform, and our association and its congregations are currently considering transforming our 7 Principles by adopting an 8th.

The 7 Principles are prefaced by the statement that our UU congregations “covenant to affirm and promote” them. As living things, covenants are ripe for transformation. Covenants lose their meaning and usefulness if they are static, fixed, and don’t adapt to our constantly changing world. But the good news is that growth, learning, and transformation are inherent to Unitarian Universalism, as the [8th Principle website](#) explains: “When we

get to a new level of understanding and clarity, our structure makes it possible to reflect that. UU is the only religion that intentionally builds in that flexibility to acknowledge the importance of ongoing revealed truth.”

The [website](#) also explains how the 8th Principle came about. Paula Cole Jones, a regional Director of Racial & Social Justice with the UUA, worked with congregations for over 15 years on the 7 Principles and the concept of deep multicultural communities. Out of this work came the realization that “a person can believe they are being a ‘good UU’ and following the 7 Principles without thinking about or dealing with racism and other oppressions at the systemic level.” Systemic racism has been around a LONG time, but events and patterns of injustice in our world—the rise and election of Donald Trump, mass incarceration of Black people at a disproportionate rate, an epidemic of police violence against and killing of people of color, recent state legislation disenfranchising voters in Black communities—have gotten us to the point that many are just now beginning to pay attention to and think about systemic oppression. UUs can be leaders in the transformation, the turning of the tide, and the bending of the arc of justice—and we can start with the 8th Principle.

So, there is work, growth, and transformation to be done. And in embracing something new, we also need to examine the meaning and role of what we already have. Donna, Joanne, and Valerie quoted a statement from the [8th Principle website](#) that I will repeat again here: “The 8th Principle came from a feeling that we need something to renew our commitment to this work, to hold ourselves accountable, and to fulfill the potential of our existing principles.” That last part—“fulfill the potential of our existing principles”—is very important. It’s our “YES, AND” statement. YES, our current Principles are a good foundation—they cover a lot of ground about how we are and want to be in community with each other... AND, we need to address a gap and make our language explicit in an area where harm has been done. The 7 Principles are good, AND we need to add to them. Both of those things can be true at the same time.

Let’s continue our UU practice of transformation and “acknowledg[ing] the importance of ongoing revealed truth” as we explore and embrace the 8th UU Principle.

# Vespers Service

Tuesday, May 4 | 7:00 pm | [Facebook Live](#)



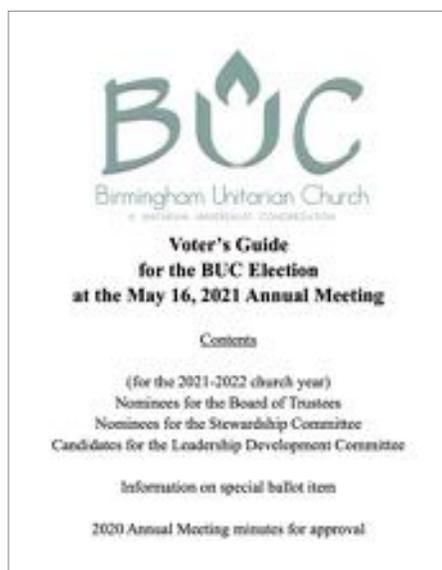
Join Keith Ensroth on Tuesday, May 4 at 7:00 pm on Facebook Live for our monthly Vespers Service. This is a joyful, yet introspective evening service that centers gratitude for the day that has passed and welcomes the night that is beginning. The service will include candle lighting in remembrance of your beloved dead and any concerns in your heart. Names for candle lighting can be submitted via [this link](#) (also on our [website](#) under Worship Links), or shared in the comments on Facebook Live.

To view the service live, visit the [Birmingham Unitarian Church Facebook page](#) at 7:00 pm on Tuesday, May 4.

The video will also remain on our Facebook page for later viewing.

## BUC 2021 Elections Nominees, Candidates, and Voter's Guide

The BUC Leadership Development Committee (LDC) is pleased to announce the nominees and candidates for leadership positions for the next church year (July 1, 2021-June 30, 2022). The list of nominees and candidates, bios, and photos, can be found in this Voter's Guide, which is also posted on the home page of the [BUC website](#). Click on the image below to open the full Voter's Guide in PDF.



Voting for the Board of Trustees, Stewardship Committee, and LDC will be completed using Election Buddy. Eligible voters will have the opportunity to vote in advance of the Annual Meeting, and all elected positions will be announced at the meeting.

The LDC is charged with identifying and nominating church members for leadership on the Board of Trustees and LDC. Questions about this or about the voting process should be directed to Kathy DuHame at [kathy.duhame@gmail.com](mailto:kathy.duhame@gmail.com).

# BUC Annual Meeting 2021

Sunday, May 16 | 12:00 pm | Zoom

The Board of Trustees, with considerable help from the Leadership Development Committee (LDC), will host BUC's 2021 Annual Meeting on Sunday, May 16 at 12:00 pm EDT on Zoom. As we did last year, voting for the Board of Trustees, Stewardship Chairs, and LDC will be completed using Election Buddy. Eligible voters will have the opportunity to vote in advance of the meeting, and Election Buddy will remain open until the start of the meeting at 12:00 noon. Any other voting will be done during the meeting using Zoom.

If you have anything you want brought before the congregation at the Annual Meeting, please submit it in writing to Board Secretary Mary Gawel-Ensroth at [mgawelensroth@gmail.com](mailto:mgawelensroth@gmail.com), no later than Friday, May 14.

There will be a few reports, including a description of the 2021-2022 budget by Board Treasurer Diane Slon. Awards will be presented to those who have served BUC in an outstanding capacity during this church year, which includes a presentation by Board Vice President Craig Stroup. LDC Chair Kathy DuHame will announce the names of those elected to the Board of Trustees, the Leadership Development Committee, and the Stewardship Chairs.

We owe a debt of thanks to the following people—listed in alphabetical order—who are making this meeting possible: Drieka DeGraff, Kathy DuHame, Mary Gawel-Ensroth, Tony Kubien, Jane O'Neil, Natalie Price, Diane Slon, and Craig Stroup.

Questions about the Annual Meeting should be directed to Board President Donna Larkin Mohr at [larkmohr@gmail.com](mailto:larkmohr@gmail.com), and questions about the voting process and the Election Buddy system should be directed to Kathy DuHame at [kathy.duhame@gmail.com](mailto:kathy.duhame@gmail.com).

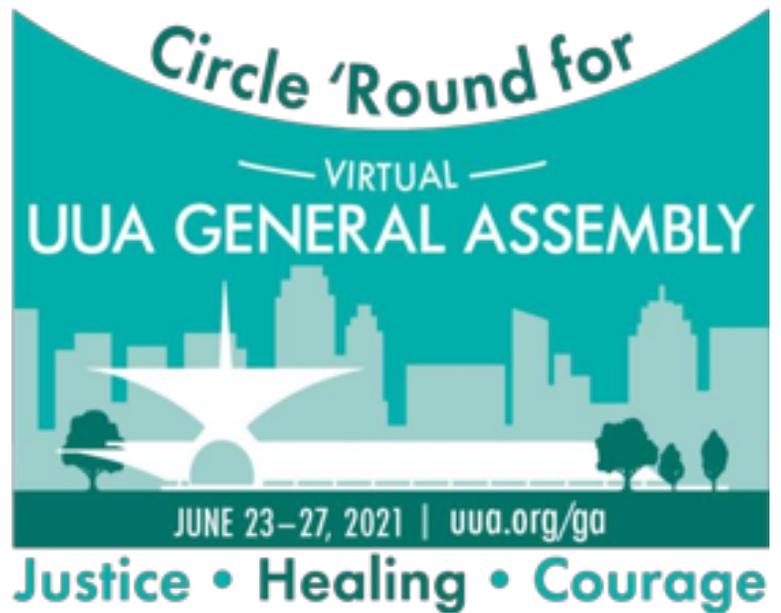
Zoom access info for the meeting is below and on the [calendar](#):

Zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/93633726424?pwd=cUd2dTQxSmxyVXIrR2NWQmxTSTlXZz09>

meeting ID: 936 3372 6424

passcode: 937209

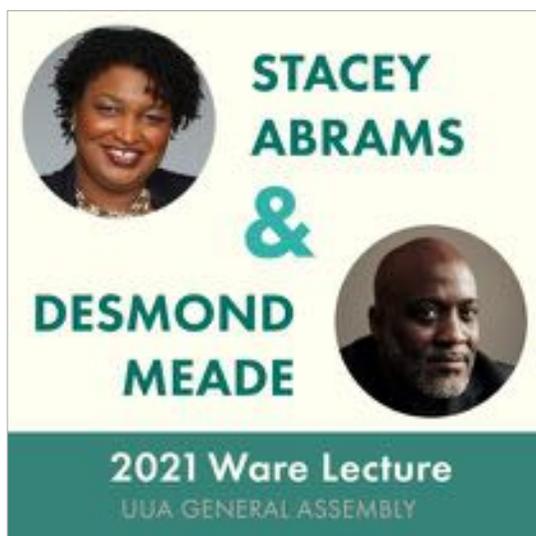
dial-in: 253-215-8782



General Assembly (GA) is the annual meeting of our Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). Participants worship, witness, learn, connect, and make policy for the Association through democratic process. Anyone may attend, and the 2021 UUA General Assembly is a 100% virtual event taking place June 23-27.

Last year's virtual GA had more than 4,900 registered attendees participate from remote locations around the world. Although we give up face-to-face interaction, we retain our dedication to community and make our experience more accessible and more environmentally sustainable.

[Registration](#) is \$200 per person. GA registrants receive access to the 2021 Online Participation Portal, including live, simu-live, and on-demand video content, the virtual exhibit hall, chat features, support, and a (new!) GA mobile app.



Registration also includes access to this year's Ware Lecture, featuring *Stacey Abrams*, voting activist, best-selling author, and former Georgia state politician; and *Desmond Meade*, author and activist for voting and criminal justice reform. The [Ware Lecture](#) is Saturday, June 26 at 7:00 pm EDT; full GA [registration](#) is required to view.

→ Click to view the [full GA schedule](#)

→ Click for [more information](#) and

[registration](#) for adults and youth

# Calendar of Events

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The events listed here can always be found on our [website](#) under [calendar](#). Events are also announced in the weekly email, Sunday service announcements, and our [BUC Community private Facebook group](#).

The [calendar](#) also lists Zoom information for committee and group meetings.

To join an event or meeting, simply click on the Zoom link. If you're not using a computer to access Zoom, you can dial into meetings with your phone by calling the number and entering the meeting ID and passcode.

## Weekly Events

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### Worship Services

Sundays | 10:30 am

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/196899450?pwd=RXJuNFpHdWMraENaZmFDWFWaSExqUT09>

dial-in: 253-215-8782  
meeting ID: 196 899 450  
passcode: 882131

### Sunday Discussion Group

Sundays | 3:00 pm

<https://zoom.us/j/96501517735?pwd=Yy9NSUg3TGRHUGxjNDY5VzRtT0dzZz09>

dial-in: 253-215-8782  
meeting ID: 965 0151 7735  
passcode: 047076

On May 16, the SDG will be discussing the second half of the book *The Tyranny of Merit: What's Become of the Common Good?* by Michael Sandel.

### Living by Heart

1st Mondays of the month | 7:00 pm

<https://zoom.us/j/99983328991?pwd=N1cybVdKYXhWSE9PVEZDSVo3Y1VxQT09>

dial-in: 253-215-8782  
meeting ID: 999 8332 8991  
passcode: 569485

Remaining Mondays of the month | 1:30 pm

<https://zoom.us/j/92103015538?pwd=YzVMZzFpQTThhb0lFUVhYYlk5Vy8vZz09>

dial-in: 253-215-8782  
meeting ID: 921 0301 5538  
passcode: 016260

# May Events

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## Vespers Service

Tuesday, May 4 | 7:00 pm

Live on the

[Birmingham Unitarian Church Facebook page](#)

## Issues and Ale

Friday, May 7 | 6:00 pm

<https://zoom.us/j/96160164949?pwd=Qmx4c0tucncraWNIQ2pPRXNRVDdoZz09>

dial-in: 253-215-8782  
meeting ID: 961 6016 4949  
passcode: 395185

## Humanists of BUC

featuring Prof. Bruce Pollack-Johnson, co-author of the proposed [8th UU Principle](#)

Sunday, May 9 | 7:00 pm

<https://zoom.us/j/96963695444?pwd=UEovOS9semRnVFh3T1FhcUg4YUxLdz09>

Meeting ID: 969 6369 5444

Passcode: 396215

Dial-in: 253-215-8782

Professor Bruce Pollack-Johnson will be speaking on “The Proposed 8th Principle,” of which he is a co-author.

## BUC Annual Meeting 2021

Sunday, May 16 | 12:00 pm

<https://zoom.us/j/93633726424?pwd=cUd2dTQxSmxyVXIrR2NWQmxTSTlXZz09>

dial-in: 253-215-8782

meeting ID: 936 3372 6424

passcode: 937209

## Humanists of BUC

featuring Kim Murphy-Kovalick of VNP

Sunday, May 16 | 7:00 pm

<https://zoom.us/j/96521968832?pwd=Z25WelBqSjh0dzQzVCT6dndhdnk3dz09>

dial-in: 253-215-8782

meeting ID: 965 2196 8832

passcode: 716232

Kim Murphy-Kovalick is the State Field Director for Voters Not Politicians (VNP). She has worked with VNP on structural democracy reforms since 2016. [Voters Not Politicians](#) is the nonpartisan nonprofit that passed the Prop 2 amendment to end gerrymandering in Michigan in 2018. Kim’s talk is titled “Ensuring our Freedom to Vote.”

**Birmingham Unitarian Church**  
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