



Donna Larkin Mohr
*President,
Board of Trustees*

Religion is about connectedness, relationships, and community. Dwelling on connectedness, I am reminded of our 7th principle. Relationships makes me think of people—those in the pews, in committees, in choir—busy, busy. “Community,” according to Webster: “a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals.” Not a bad definition, but somehow woefully inadequate.

The Reverend James C. Leach wrote: “On Friday, I met with the stunned, shocked widow of one of our most active members who suddenly, unexpectedly died on Wednesday afternoon. She doesn’t need the freedom to find her own path right now. She wasn’t coming to assert her personal position on some issue. She wasn’t asking for the right to be a religious individualist. She desperately, desperately needs a community, a group of people whose interests are larger than self-interests, a congregation that can embody some belief that her well-being and our well-being are inextricably tied together, as if in some expansive web.”

There are many of us who actively participate in the life of BUC, and some of us have a clear picture of the widow in dire need of community. Even those of us with family nearby acknowledge that our BUC community is an integral and essential part of our lives. It is easy to envision the expansive web.

The Reverend Fred Small wrote: “Martin Luther King Jr. envisioned a Beloved Community of love and justice, where the races would be reconciled, and the deep and terrible wounds of racism finally healed. ‘Our ultimate goal,’ King said, ‘is genuine intergroup and interpersonal living—integration.’ Physical desegregation is not enough, King insisted, for it leaves us ‘spiritually segregated, where elbows are together and hearts apart.’”

At BUC, our worship supports a spiritually integrated community; we have a strong desire to be together. While we might prefer our sanctuary, we enjoy the faces of fellow congregants on Zoom and hearing meaningful words and stories while we work at being spiritually integrated.

The Reverend Sally Patton wrote: “Over fifteen hundred years ago Benedict wrote a short, simple document about hospitality called The Rule to guide monks living in monasteries which during his time were small communities of fifteen or so people. The Rule has endured over time and shapes most of Western monasticism. St. Benedict believed in order to grow as a human being, you need other people. To be a person of Great Spirit cannot be done alone. St. Benedict’s rules of radical hospitality offer a wonderful model for individuals and faith communities to live by. Adapting the practice of St. Benedict’s radical hospitality leads to the creation of a beloved community in which the different, those who appear strange, and those who are marginalized are welcomed and accepted. St. Benedict’s hospitality is a way of love. St. Benedict asks that we see the divine in every single adult and child that we encounter.”

Sometimes it is difficult to comprehend what life must have been like 1500 years ago—no toothbrush or toothpaste, no tin of tuna fish or beans, no can opener. We would have had a larder, not a pantry, and the contents would have been dramatically different. No electricity, no car, no daily shower. Yet, we know Benedict observed the need for a beloved community, and the route to achieving it is radical hospitality. Our Membership team does a lovely 4-part program for newcomers to introduce them to the love we embrace.

The Reverend Bret Lortie wrote: “Avant-garde composer Jonathan Harvey says that ‘music is both emotionally intense and possessed of a deep sense of harmony.’ He points to how music disproves Aristotle’s Law of the Excluded Middle, which says that a thing cannot be two things at once... it must either be this thing or that thing and cannot exist in ambiguity. Think of how many times this dualistic notion has gotten our world into trouble. Right versus wrong. Us versus them. Evil-doers versus, well, who? But music offers us an alternative, for, as Harvey

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says, if music is to be meaningful, it must be more than one thing at a time. Beautiful and abrasive. Harmonious and dissonant. It must exist in ambiguity, or as poet John Keats put it, it must be full of ‘contradictions... uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.’”

At our May 23 worship service, our amazing musicians and choir shared their music with us—not just one style, but a variety. The music community at BUC is blessed with abundant talent and diversity. It is a core strength of BUC that builds and grows our beautiful community, a community that is composed of many people, ideas, and viewpoints. As the saying goes, we do not have to think alike to love alike. We do, however, have to diligently work to support and grow our beloved community. It does not just happen. Join us, and help us grow our community together.

In faith,

Donna



Abha Dearing
Co-Director of Music Ministry

Many of you know I have been teaching for 23 years now. I taught at Mercy High School during 9/11 and the aftermath of the culture shifts that occurred. I directed The Mercyairens, a singing/dancing ensemble of 21 students which had previously performed 30-40 shows per year in and around the community. Suddenly, after 9/11, students were restricted from many of these extra excursions due to safety concerns, school liability, and a hyper-nervous administration who, in hindsight, capitulated to mass hysteria. My students, who loved to perform and connect with each other and the community through their presentations, were put in the difficult position of trying to do what was important and needed versus following the rules. I urged students to advocate for their cause based on facts and due diligence. And I told them that if they got in trouble, they should say “It’s okay. Mrs. Dearing has my back” or “Please don’t be angry with me. Talk to Mrs. Dearing.”

As a surprise, while away on a retreat that the group fought to experience, they surprised me by all wearing t-shirts that said “It’s ok, we’re with Dearing” and gave me a t-shirt that said “It’s ok, I’m with the Mercyairens.” They had created their safe place, a community that they knew held their values and sheltered them from “going it alone.”

We all crave love and belonging after our basic needs are met. To live in a family, have a friends’ circle, and be part of a larger community is to have a shared experience, common values, and multiple perspectives, with the baseline of love underlying all of the relationships. At BUC, we share worship, time together, and thoughts about each other when we are apart. The BUC Chalice Choir shares rehearsals, personal stories, and their voices regularly with each other. The community we strive to create is a living, breathing entity whose dynamics ebb and flow but whose core is one of commitment to our common ideals. And though BUC is one of my workplaces, I feel gratitude that I have a community which embraces me and my family. Maybe we should get t-shirts that say “It’s ok, I’m a UU” or “It’s ok, I’m with BUC.”



Steven Dearing

Co-Director of Music Ministry

It's amazing how much we need community, but even more so how we don't realize we need it until it is gone. I consider myself a bit of a loner in the fact that I am a solo musician for the most part, I have a small circle of friends, and I am quite self-sufficient.

When our split position at BUC went full-time a few years ago, I made the tough decision to leave my other job as Adjunct Professor at the University of Windsor after 23 years of service. My duties included performing at bi-annual faculty recitals, watching students win scholarships and awards, and being surrounded by amazing musicians. The two decades flew by.

Not long after resigning, I felt a void in my life. I lost my connection to both colleagues and students. Even though I was plenty busy with students at home and church work, there was something missing. I used to complain about having to drive to a different county and wait at the Canadian border and the unfavourable currency exchange, but when it was gone, I felt like a part of my identity was also gone.

When the pandemic hit, I didn't worry about things at first because I had a chance to hunker down with my amazing family. But after a few weeks of our Zoom worship services, I found that playing music into a computer screen was just plain hard. There was no energy coming back from the room. There was no chance to see someone be moved emotionally by the music I had just played. There was no receiving line with people to talk to afterwards.

Thankfully, things are looking up. It seems that we will be back together again, and having just celebrated ten years of service to our beloved BUC community, I can say that this is far more than a job. It is a calling that I long for, being amongst my church peeps once again.

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

The central focus of Religious Education this year was community building. Community is the core of church, able to weather the intensity of the past year because our covenant with one another is strong. And while many of us found our way to Unitarian Universalism in a haphazard way via other faiths or as skeptical guests, what keeps us in this community is deeply intentional. The 7 Principles, the proposed 8th Principle, the BUC mission statement, and our individual reasons for being Unitarian Universalist were carefully crafted. We cannot live into those lofty goals without challenging ourselves, and our Unitarian Universalist community cannot exist without those lofty goals.

And we cannot expect to meet those goals alone. This, more than anything else, is why it was important to drop everything and focus on community building this year. We could not expect to make it through all of these complicated traumas alone. And so, alongside family members, peers, advisors, and congregants, BUC children and youth built community with one another.

For early elementary kids, this meant exploring story and values with their families through parent-led lessons. Just as parents are the primary religious educators, they are also often the first example a child has of how to interact with others in the family community. In creating a family covenant, they practice taking responsibility for how to act around one another. They practice responding when that covenant is broken.

6th and 7th graders learned about world religions, contextualizing themselves and their Unitarian Universalist faith in the wide community of all humanity. They practiced holding others' beliefs in respect and love. They began to create a picture of Unitarian Universalist faith and history with a global lens.

Our 8th graders committed to a deeper relationship with the Unitarian Universalist community by exploring their own faith. They examined their values and learned to be led by them. We then held a congregation-wide ceremony and ritual to welcome them into our community in a meaningful way.

And the senior-high students of GUUSH, who spent this whole year committing to justice, created and led two youth services—one for themselves, and one to share with the whole congregation. Around January they learned about the 8th Principle and decided this proposed revision to the Unitarian Universalist community covenant was calling them to action. It is precisely because the high-school youth understand our community and covenant—and because they have a connection to Unitarian Universalist history and justice work—that this 8th Principle's call to action was so clear.

And that is why we do church. It's not just a place to hang out or engage in casually—this BUC community is a place of covenant, belief, history, deep relationship, justice, and action. It is a community that constantly asks us to be better, and to live into our values more deeply than before... and to do it together.



Valerie Phillips
Administrator

Recently, I was surprised to find an overlap between two communities that are important to me. At the beginning of May, while my kids had a day off school, the school district staff spent the day attending a professional learning event. The superintendent of schools sent an email detailing the aspects of their learning. He stated, “The focus of our staff learning this afternoon was diversity, equity, and inclusion.” The school district has been learning about and working on these topics for a while. These topics have also been highlighted in the news and are certainly alive in conversation and action at BUC. Diversity, equity, and inclusion were hot on my mind, too, as we just wrote reflections on the 8th Principle proposed to be included in our current UU Principles.

I was excited to read further, but as I did, I became positively giddy. The superintendent had the following to say in his email to the community, “As a District, we work hard to lift up, encourage, and support each and every

child, to make sure everyone feels loved. All are welcome here no matter the color of their skin, who they love, how they identify, if or how they worship, their family income, where they live, what they look like, their abilities, or what language they speak.” These words reminded me about many of the characteristics of BUC that brought me to our church community to start with. To see the school community where I live, and where my children attend school, overlap beliefs with my religious and spiritual community was a beautiful surprise.

This is a very positive aspect of changes in the world from what I grew up experiencing within my school and local community. There is a shift in approach and commitment in discussing these topics. I am proud and blessed to see children learn and grow within my local school and church communities. Seeing so many engaged in discussing these important issues and taking action fills my heart and gives me hope for the future.



Sara Constantakis
Communications Coordinator

When we think about community, what can naturally first come to our minds are groups organized around common life experiences. So for many of us, at a basic level, our communities are defined by where we live, where we go to school, and where we work. Throughout my own life, I've lived in four different suburbs of metro Detroit, I've been a part of five different educational institutions from grade through graduate school, and I've been a part of five different organizations as an employee. Our membership in these types of groups is usually based on geography and/or necessity and, when we are younger, is often chosen for us. I'll call these "situational" communities. As our lives go on, we are more likely to join groups of our own choosing. We seek out these groups of our own free will because they align around our beliefs, values, interests, passions, and emotional and spiritual needs. I'll call these "intentional" communities. I

have been a part of a few intentional communities throughout my life, including a theater community, an improv community, and a support community around a specific medical issue.

Religious communities fall into both categories—they can be situational/chosen for us (and sometimes, tragically, forced upon us) and they can be intentionally chosen. I've been a part of three different church communities in my life. Two of them—the two Catholic congregations I was a part of from birth into my late 20s—were chosen for me. BUC is the first religious community that was an intentional choice, one that has deeply and profoundly shaped my adult life.

As my intentional community, BUC isn't "just" where I go to church, or—because I have dual identity here—"just" where I work, because intentional community is not just the container we are put in (or end up in, situationally) with others. Truly intentional community is more than that: it's how we act in relationship to everyone else in that "container."

Being part of an intentional community like BUC is not always easy, because by its very definition, it's not something passive. Being part of an intentional community involves responsibility and upholding the covenants—implicit and explicit—we make with one another. The covenant of our BUC community is etched on the wall in the lobby of our physical building, but if we didn't also live out that covenant in our relationships with one another, its words would be meaningless. It is work, but the rewards are many. Let's do the work together—intentionally—with joy and radical love.

As part of this beloved BUC community, I promise to:

- ...strive to be my best self in all my interactions
 - ...assume the best intentions of everyone's actions
 - ...be mindful of our shared humanity in my communications
 - ... pause, reflect and be part of the solution when things go awry
- Thus do we covenant with one another.



Marcia Mahood
Rental Coordinator

Community. That describes the heart of my experience at BUC. We first came to BUC during an election year. We had just moved to Bloomfield Township from a liberal community in New Mexico, and our children were getting into arguments about politics on the school bus. It turns out their schoolmates came from more conservative backgrounds, and our boys were working through this adjustment. So at dinner one night, after yet another argument was reported, I declared “That’s it. We are all going to the Unitarian church on Sunday. You will find some liberals there.” And so off we went to BUC, a mere 17 years ago. The boys went to RE, and I will never forget my husband Neb’s reaction. He turned to me in the sanctuary at the end of the sermon by Rev. Doug Gallagher, and said “I feel like I am home.”

Neb’s words were prophetic because BUC has been our home for the past 17 years. Neb and I have been involved in the church in so many different ways, and it has been our beloved community. I’ve been engaged in many different volunteer roles, and for the past 2 ½ years on staff as Rental Coordinator, I have also had the privilege to have known the community of renters at BUC, and worked with the wonderful BUC staff. I could go on at length recounting all the different roles I’ve had at BUC, but the essential kernel of truth for me has been that the more you put into this community, the more you personally will thrive at BUC.

And so it is with some sadness, but a profound sense of gratitude, that Neb and I get ready to embark on a new chapter of our lives. We will be moving to New York state in July as Neb takes a new job. And so, as I write my last newsletter article, I convey this simple but key piece of advice. The more engaged I got at BUC, the more friendships I developed and the more my relationships deepened with my fellow BUCers. Doing shared work with others is profoundly satisfying and deeply rewarding.

As we come out of this pandemic, we will soon enough be back together in person. I think this unusual period has us all looking at what matters in our lives. I think we all want to feel connected. Come and deepen your connections at BUC and help work towards a bigger and better community. It has been a very important part of our family life for 17 years, and I guarantee you will not be disappointed. Come home to BUC and its beloved community. Thank you for the joy, love, friendships, and fellowship shared here at BUC. I look forward to visits back “home” to BUC in years to come.



Joanne Copeland
Bookkeeper

June's theme is "Community." It's a good one, especially after our Annual Meeting on May 16. I was looking at everyone's Zoom frame at the meeting and noticing all the familiar faces and thinking... what a great group of people! Some I have known for years and some I barely know, but there we were, our BUC community, listening to our leaders. I was glad to see everyone. Someday we will be back together and until then, I totally trust our Minister and the Task Force to make that happen when it's the safest.

Then I started thinking about how many "communities" I have or have had in my life. Wow, there are a lot! And it made me feel like my life is full. And it is. I'm fortunate to be part of several groups of people with whom I went to high school, worked, and grew up. Through Facebook and Zoom, I have been able to visit with them, and soon we will be meeting in person... yay for science! I can't wait!

Of course, there is the family. Unfortunately, the 2016 election created a divide in our family, a family that was very close prior to then. The divide continues over vaccinations, too. But the family I'm closest to have been great through this pandemic. I feel blessed.

Vespers Service

Tuesday, June 1 | 7:00 pm | **Facebook Live**



Join Keith Ensroth on Tuesday, June 1 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 the lighting of memorial candles, candles of concern, and candles of hope and joy. 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, June 1. The video will also remain on our Facebook page for later viewing.

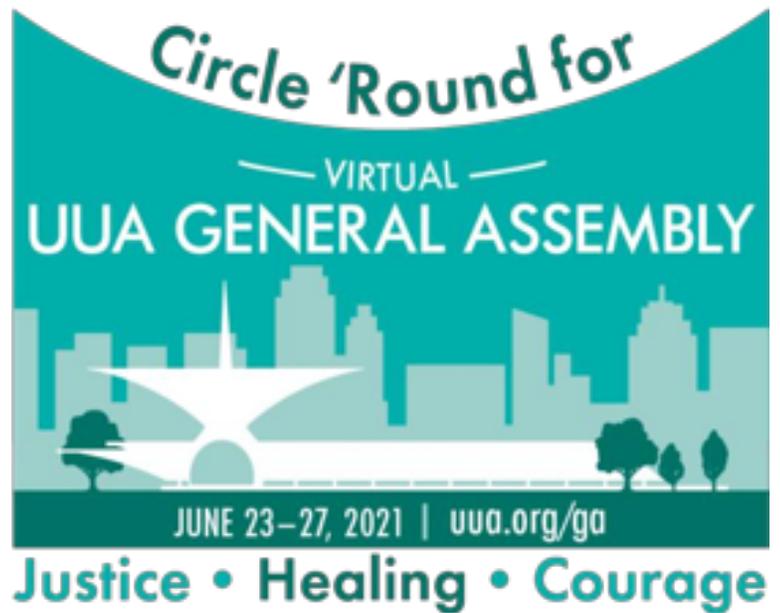
Reopening Information

You heard a lot at our recent Annual Meeting, including an update from our Reopening Task Force (RTF). The RTF wants you to know we are partially open. We are currently renting space inside the building to individuals and groups. If your small group or committee wants to hold an in-person meeting at BUC, please telephone our Administrator, Valerie Phillips, to schedule your group. The most important thing to remember is that you agree to abide by the same rules as our renters.

The rules are constantly being updated, so Valerie will notify you of the current rules when you schedule your meeting space. We also expect you to communicate to members of your group the current requirements for both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals. There are ways to meet at BUC and also provide Zoom access for those unable to attend in-person. Also, the building is currently locked and secured, so you will need to coordinate your arrival with the office staff to gain access to the building. BUC has taken measures to enhance the ventilation of our rooms with improvements in air furnace/cooler filtration and portable air cleaners.

In summary, please contact the office at 248-647-2380 if you are interested in holding your committee or small group meeting at BUC. We look forward to working with you, so you will have a safe and comfortable time meeting again in-person.

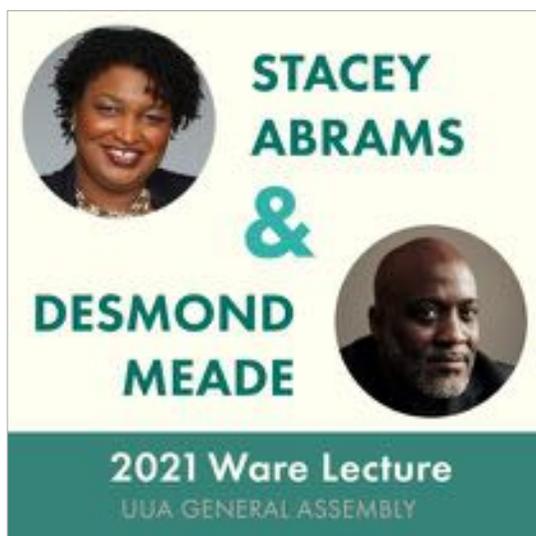
Please direct any questions about reserving building space to Valerie Phillips at valerie.phillips@bucmi.org or the above telephone number. Please direct any other questions about reopening to Board President Donna Larkin Mohr at larkmohr@gmail.com.



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

Social and Environmental Justice Notes

Juneteenth

Juneteenth is a holiday celebrating the emancipation of people who had been enslaved in the United States. It is commemorated on the anniversary of the June 19, 1865 announcement by Union Army General Gordon Granger: “The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free.” But wait. Weren’t enslaved people freed by President Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation in January of 1863? Yes, on paper—but enforcement of it lagged and, in some states, required the advance of Union troops. Texas was one of the last states to officially recognize freedom for enslaved people. The ratification of the 13th Amendment on December 6, 1865 abolished chattel slavery nationwide.

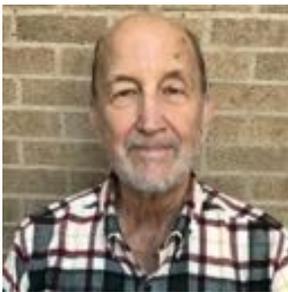
Juneteenth celebrations spread from Texas to other states over time and, during recent years, have gained wider attention across the U.S. It is a reminder, as we reckon with the ongoing effects of white supremacy and racism, that freedom is just a word unless we all do the work to make it so.

Harper West to Lead Civic Engagement



The SEJ Council is pleased to announce that Harper West has joined the Council as leader of the Civic Engagement workstream. Harper is a long-time political activist and supporter of social justice. In addition to Civic Engagement, the SEJ is leading work on Racial Justice, Environmental Action, and Economic Justice. Welcome to the team, Harper!

Fred Straky: 20 Years of Tutoring



Longtime BUCer Fred Straky has been a stalwart member of the BUC tutoring team in Pontiac, first at Whitmer Human Resource Center school and then Walt Whitman Elementary School. He was among the first volunteers when the program was introduced and tutored students for about 20 years. Many students benefited from his dedication to their learning. Fred recently moved to the Chicago area. Thank you, Fred, for your service on behalf of the students and best wishes as you adapt to your new home city.

Environmental Action Update

Same Bill, New Number

On April 1, 2021, the [Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act](#) was re-introduced to Congress. You may remember ten months ago, on June 14, 2020, when BUC voted 96% for our church to endorse the Act and add our name to the list of faith communities, local governments, businesses, and prominent individuals who believe it can help solve the climate crisis.

A group of BUC members, the [Climate Change Resolution Task Force](#), offered multiple chances to learn about the Act last year; videos of many of our presentations are still available on the [BUC website](#).

Now the Act has a new number—House Bill 2307—and a few changes. On May 5, the BUC Environmental Action team (which includes most of the members of the Climate Change Resolution Task Force) took a deep dive to review the changes. After Karen Stankye's thorough presentation, we feel confident that the changes do not impact the essential nature of the Act, and we can stand behind our BUC endorsement.

A chart comparing the originally endorsed Act (House Bill 763) can be found [here](#), and a copy of our Climate Change Resolution can be found [here](#). If you have questions or would like to discuss further, you are invited to contact Karen at kesala@msn.com.

Calendar of Events

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

Worship Services

Sundays | 10:30 am

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/196899450?pwd=RXJuNFpHdWMraENaZmFDWFVaSExqUT09>

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

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

June Events

Vespers Service

Tuesday, June 1 | 7:00 pm

Live on the

[Birmingham Unitarian Church Facebook page](#)

Humanists of BUC

featuring Dawud Walid,

Executive Director of the Michigan chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations

Sunday, June 13 | 7:00 pm

<https://zoom.us/j/92279015350?pwd=ZDZja21yMVAxVWljNlIIVdTNHbjN4dz09>

Meeting ID: 922 7901 5350

Passcode: 122022

Dial-in: 253-215-8782

Dawud Walid will be speaking on “Islamophobia and Its Impact”

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