



Rev. Mandy Beal
Senior Minister

I am so excited about this month's worship theme. Technically, I choose the worship themes, but I do that based on the input of our Worship Associates, staff, and others. This year, there was a coalescence of topics related to the practice of Unitarian Universalism, and I couldn't be happier.

Many of us come to UUism from other religious traditions, particularly Christianity. Often, we find our way here after a traumatic or unfulfilling experience. In our Living Tradition, we find a freedom and affirmation of our worthiness that may have been missing. The experience of being loved and accepted, of being intellectually challenged and encouraged to grow without the pressure of dogma, is incredibly freeing.

Unitarian Universalism has touched all of our lives in profound ways. But sometimes, it's hard to get a handle on exactly what Unitarian Universalism is. Here are some of my favorite "Intro to UU" FAQs:

Q: Are we a religion?

A: Yes.

Q: Are we a Christian denomination?

A: Not really, but we came from two Christian denominations.

Q: Are we a post-God humanist society?

A: No. UUs are responsible for answering life's big questions for themselves. Some of us find those answers through belief in God (or another way of saying "God") and some of us don't. Most of us will experience the idea of "God" differently over the course of our lives.

Q: Are we a nondenominational church?

A: No, we are Unitarian Universalists.

Q: Is there such a thing as UU theology?

A: Yes! We have a shared theological foundation and a diversity of individual theologies—even atheologies! We explore theological concepts in worship services, church programs, and in our lives.

So, if Unitarian Universalism is a religion with a distinct theology and identity, what does it mean to be a devout UU? What are our religious practices and how do they set us apart from other religious peoples? I'm looking forward to exploring that with you this month.



Abha Dearing

Co-Director of Music Ministry

Maybe it's a bit hokey, but I honestly love thinking about how I live out the 7 Principles of Unitarian Universalism. It surprises me how much of my day has me accidentally striving to uphold them. Not that I am "holier than thou," but when we go about our lives, looking up stuff, aren't we "search(ing) for truth and meaning"? And when we stick up for a kid who is being teased, aren't we honoring the "inherent worth and dignity" of that person? And then there's recycling, voting, signing petitions, sending postcards, marching, emailing, etc. OK, enough back-patting.

Actual "acceptance of one another" and "compassion in human relations" can be hard for me, especially if our ideals and goals differ, or if you have a strong opinion about something I am doing, and it's not all flowers and compliments. In my twenty years as an experimenting, questioning, then practicing UU, these two principles (#2 and #3, as I

view them) can be challenging for me to uphold. Over the years, I have met choir members who I didn't really fancy at first. Maybe they asked lots of questions at inopportune times. Maybe they disagreed with my song choices. Maybe they made repertoire suggestions I didn't really care for. Maybe they monopolized limited choir time with long-winded stories.

Or maybe a congregant told me that they liked it when other people sang the hymns instead of me, or that the band was too loud, or they couldn't understand my words, or the harmonies I sang didn't quite "fit" their idea of the song.

It is in *these* moments when I am challenged to remember to be compassionate and look upon everyone with love and acceptance. At these moments, I have a choice. I am human, so sometimes I get defensive. At first, I might get upset or annoyed, or feel unappreciated or snarky. But then, I have my awesome 7 Principles to fall back on. They prevent me from spending too much time in "Negative Nancy"-ville (no offense to all the fabulous Nancies at BUC). Soon after feeling bad, I remember that the person before me is a beautiful person, deserving of dignity, respect, acceptance, and most of all, compassion. That person wants to feel heard. They want to be noticed, acknowledged, and embraced for what they have to offer. Don't we all?

I am grateful each day to have found a church home for my spirit, heart, marriage, family, and work. The 7 Principles are the foundation and go-to for me in a pinch. I am sure glad we've got them.



Steven Dearing
Co-Director of Music Ministry

As a newly married man living in Ferndale, I remember having a talk with Abha about how I was “missing church,” or maybe, more specifically, the feeling of being at a place of reverence on a recurring basis. Not long after that fleeting discussion, Abha became the new choir director at BUC.

Now, that was more than twenty years ago, and I had previously gone to church so few times that I could count them on my hands. I am not really sure what I was missing (I’ll just say it was a calling), but when Abha won the job, what followed was not only a new place of worship, but a new, philosophical way of being.

Unitarian Universalism offers a codified set of principles that don’t require deep study. The principles are straightforward with no mysticism attached, and they just make plain sense. They promote humanity, and allow for tangent points when life gets tricky, reminding us that there can be more than one side to some things. I believe our principles encourage us to invite differences of opinion, welcoming them and considering those differences, even when—or especially when—life gets most challenging.

As a father, I find that having the principles spelled out right at the front of *Singing the Living Tradition*—a book I use throughout the week—acts as a gentle reminder that helps me when “fathering,” and many of us know, or can imagine, how challenging parenting is.

Another way my religion serves me is in how I can stop myself from reacting as situations arise. My grounding in UUism reminds me that I can start my response from a place of Love. It is a work in progress, but as with most tools, it take a while to perfect their uses.

I am grateful for the many ways Unitarian Universalism has shaped me, even if I wish I didn’t have to explain how we worship.



Nico Van Ostrand
Religious Education Coordinator

At first glance, this month's theme of "Devout Unitarian Universalism" brings me immediately to the UU Principles. These are the core of our faith. The Principles are our shared covenant, the promises we aspire to uphold. It is impossible to both stagnate and follow the 7 Principles, because it is impossible to always follow all 7 Principles all the time, so we must always be trying to grow and learn. Every aspect of Unitarian Universalism—from worship to religious education to conversation circles and coffee hour—is rooted in the Principles. If the connection is not immediately clear, I invite you to look closer.

But the "devout" part of this theme... "devout" basically means "devoted," and while many Unitarian Universalists have a complicated relationship with traditionally religious language like "devout," I do think it has a home in our liberal faith tradition.

What is more devoted to Unitarian Universalism than continuing to attend church amidst the constant onslaught of historic events we are living through? I am in awe of the families with young kids who receive our K-5 lesson plans by email each month and rise to the challenge of guiding their kids through questions and activities about morals, community-building, and covenant. I feel wonder at the youth who show up at weekly or bi-weekly classes to learn about world religions, explore their own beliefs, and hold space for one another. I love watching all-ages services and hearing what our chalice-lighters have to say, watching kids dance us out of the service and into the rest of Sunday.

Is that not devotion?

There are a million things vying for our attention right now. What is it about Unitarian Universalism that lets church win out, even just for one hour each week?

I sincerely hope that Religious Education helps answer that question—not just through the quality of the advisors, council, and curriculum, but also as a tool for children and youth figuring out how to answer that question, too.

Often when younger kids are asked why they come to church, the answer is "because my grownups make me." Sometimes I even get "because I like playing with my friends"—answers that both need closer examination to be tied to the 7 Principles. As kids get older, though, those answers often change. I start getting answers like "this is where I process what's happening in the world," or "my church friends care about the same things that I do."

This shift doesn't happen by accident. The entire church community is part of proving to our children and youth that Unitarian Universalism is something worth devotion. The way we value our church shows up in the causes we work on, the financial support we offer, the wisdom we share, the posture with which we approach difficult questions. We are all—at every age—being examples to one another of what it means to be a devout Unitarian Universalist. It is difficult, and it is worth it.



Valerie Phillips
Administrator

I am still a newbie to being a Unitarian Universalist. When I was in my 20's, my mother suggested I look into the UUs. I was hesitant, but I trusted her. I did a little looking and found things that caught my interest. However, at that time in my life, as soon as I saw the words "God" or "religion," I was out. The UUs came up again when Trent was in Cub Scouts and needed to earn his Religion badge. A trustworthy friend and scout leader, who was a UU herself, suggested I explore it again. Turns out, I still wasn't ready for it in my 30's.

After my divorce, and now in my 40's, I was at a point of deep reflection on myself and my family. I felt as though something was missing from my life. My soul needed something more. I really wasn't sure what that meant, but I knew what I felt. With few friends and family here in Michigan, I wanted to find a community with diverse people who held ideas and values similar to what I held and was trying to teach my children. I knew a com-

munity like this would be able to teach, guide, and offer more to my children and myself than I ever could on my own. After searching for a Unitarian Universalist church to visit, I chose BUC. I still remember the instant, personal connection I experienced during that first service. It made me come back for (almost) every Sunday service since.

The 7 Principles strengthened the thoughts, beliefs, and values that I have and hope for my children to have. I have been able to explore the new concept of spirituality in my life. I have been introduced to new ways to be involved and engaged. I have greater purpose and meaning through our community. I have discovered what it means and feels like to love one another.

Of course, from the beginning, my mom was right. She was sowing the seeds, out of love, even when I wasn't ready to grow. She knew what I needed or would need someday. More hands, and hearts, can do more together than on their own.



Marcia Mahood
Rental Coordinator

When I learned that the February topic was Devout Unitarian Universalism, I immediately launched into panic mode. Fight or flight. Well, since I am unable to run away from this task, I needed to confront the feelings that were making me uncomfortable. Once my initial panic subsided, I did what all good UUs do. I consulted the dictionary. Devout. That term is defined as “expressing piety or religious fervor.” Fewer things strike terror into the heart of UUs than the use of traditional religious language being applied to our UU principles.

There are other loaded words that have come back into the UU lexicon. “Prayer” comes to mind. These were words that had been banned in the past, especially in the days when the majority of UUs were humanists. This is the world I grew

up in as a young girl, in a small town in eastern Ontario. The UU fellowship I attended was in a university town and had a high intellectual quality to the sermons, with little to no talk of tending to the spirit. We were too small to have a minister, so most of our speakers were professors from the local university. The sermons were wide-ranging and reflected the concerns of the day. Terms like “prayer” and “devotion” and “spirituality” were not used, but I am describing a world that is half a century old. UUism has come a long way.

So back to this word: devout. You also may feel initially uncomfortable with this word. Perhaps that is due to experiences in your previous religious affiliation. Again, the dictionary defines the word “devout” as “expressing piety or religious fervor.” Piety is a “belief or point of view that is accepted with unthinking conventional reverence.” Now that is a definition that could curl my hair. It flies against the bedrock UU tenet that we get to choose our own relationship to this UU faith. Fervor does not suggest choice.

Since the dictionary is not soothing my soul, I go to the thesaurus and look up “devout.” Committed, genuine, earnest, loyal, and dedicated. Finally some solace. Now these words, I can commit to. I have been an earnest and committed UU all my life. I grew up with the RE texts of Martin and Judy, as commissioned by Sophia Fahs. Neb and I were married at the chapel at Queen’s University, not far from the lecture hall where I attended the UU fellowship as a teen and young adult. As we’ve moved around, we have found wonderful community through our UU churches in Albuquerque, NM and now in Bloomfield Hills.

So, am I a devout UU? I’m still not sure, but instead of running away from the term, I can proudly say I am a committed, dedicated, earnest, loyal, and genuine member of this congregation and wider faith.



Sara Constantakis

Communications Coordinator

I came to Unitarian Universalism in my very early 30s after having been a part of the Catholic church all my life. This included attending Catholic schools from kindergarten through 12th grade and being an active participant in two congregations, both with my family growing up, and later as an adult. Catholicism was the only religious perspective offered to me during my formative years. It was several years into working a professional job—having had new experiences, met new friends, moved out of my childhood home, and continued to mature intellectually and emotionally—before I realized that I didn’t belong in that faith tradition and didn’t align with its beliefs and values. Revelations of widespread criminal sexual abuse by Catholic priests was the final impetus for my departure, after which I was “church-less” for about four years.

I attended my first Sunday service at BUC in January 2008 with friends who lived near the church and suggested we all check it out together. I knew nothing

about Unitarian Universalism. I don’t think I’d even heard of it. 13 years later, I know a lot more. I love, respect, and espouse our Seven Principles, and they guide my everyday life, though I’m not perfect at it. (I must admit, I don’t even have all seven fully memorized! I hope Rev. Mandy isn’t reading this.) So while I’m not sure if I practice “devout” Unitarian Universalism, what I do know with certainty is that I practice devout BUCism. I’ve never been involved in any other UU congregation, and I’ve attended only two services at another UU church. The Principles themselves might suggest that I explore outside of our congregation a little more, and perhaps I will someday, but for me, Unitarian Universalism is BUC. I formed, and am still forming, my faith here, in the midst of our Beloved Community and our unique collective expression of Unitarian Universalism. And it’s fairly easy to see how just about everything we do here at BUC can be traced back to one or more of the Seven Principles. As a congregant, the most meaningful and consistent way I’ve participated in living the UU principles at BUC has been through social justice activities like volunteering with Greening of Detroit and South Oakland Shelter, performing in *The Vagina Monologues* and *The Laramie Project*, and serving a stint on the plate collection committee, but I also expressed the principles through my participation in a small group and a Chalice Circle and serving as a Worship Associate. And becoming a staff member gave me a rare and treasured opportunity to live out the principles—and BUCism—as a ministry and profession.

The best thing about being a part of this Beloved Community is that it’s not really about how *I* live out the principles; it’s about how *we* do, together. As both a member of this congregation and a staff member, I affirm and promote Unitarian Universalism, but what means the most to me is how I affirm and promote BUCism. And I try to do that devoutly, every day.



Joanne Copeland
Bookkeeper

I was thinking about our February theme, “Devout Unitarian Universalism,” and what came to mind were the BUC Choir trips to different UU churches in Michigan, Chicago, Indiana, Ohio, New York, and the big ones, Europe and England. I was thinking of all the people we met and their church services. It was interesting to learn that we all seemed to have the same beliefs, but there were differences in the belief in God. It seemed a bit more God-oriented in Europe (Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Germany, etc.) and a variety in the United States. But, the one main theme we all seem to agree on is the Golden Rule, “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” That’s how I live my life, and it includes everything:

people, animals, and Mother Earth.

Vespers Service

Tuesday, February 2 | 7:00 pm | [Facebook Live](#)



Join Rev. Mandy on Tuesday, February 2 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 and information 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, February 2. The video will also remain on our Facebook page for later viewing.

From the Board

“The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large”—our fifth principle—has special meaning for the Board of Trustees. We often speak of consensus, which, in some cultures, means unanimity.

Majority rules! We do not require everyone to agree before taking a vote. It is lovely when, after deliberation, we are unanimous. However, our fifth principle makes clear that the democratic process guides our decision-making.

Reflect on the “right of conscience.” Our conscience is that inner voice which acts as a guide to the rightness or wrongness of one’s behavior, one’s decisions, one’s choices. If we suffer from narcissism, it will be difficult to demonstrate the right of conscience needed in leaders.

Fortunately, we elect members to the Leadership Development Committee who have the responsibility to seek out leaders who will serve our congregation, not just themselves. This year’s board has demonstrated a willingness to learn and work together for the common good of our congregation and the wider world.

Being a Unitarian Universalist is at the core of my being. Not because I fully live our seven principles, but because they provide the light that shines on my path. The principles encourage me, give me something for which to strive.

As I write this, I am listening to the inaugural of our 46th US President. Looking forward to rebuilding, reconciliation, and the dawning of a new day—a day in which our Unitarian Universalist values are greatly needed.



In faith,

Donna Larkin Mohr

President, Board of Trustees

It's Bake-Off Time!

Orders due by February 10



Show some love for the Religious Education program and BUC community by ordering some delicious homemade treats provided by our star volunteer bakers. Bake-Off is a time-honored tradition that benefits RE, and this year we are taking it virtual.

In addition to \$10-per-dozen Fan Favorites like sugar cookies and chocolate-chip cookies, you can also order \$20-per-dozen “Mystery Bakes” and be delightfully surprised by a special treat not listed

on the menu! And the icing on the cake: for \$5, the RE Council will send a hand-made Care Card on your behalf to a BUC community member who could use a little extra love.

All baked goods ordered will be available for pickup at the BUC building on February 14 between 2:00-4:00 pm.

Don't want any treats but still want to support our RE program? You can also make a monetary donation of any amount.

All Bake-Off orders must be received by Wednesday, February 10, so place yours now! To order or donate online, look for the blue Bake-Off button on our [website](#), or follow this link: [**Bake-Off Menu and Order Form**](#)

— Membership Committee Events —

Getting to Know Unitarian Universalism

Four Sundays in February and March | 12:00-1:30 pm | Zoom

February 7: “Getting to Know U: Our Own Spiritual Paths”

February 21: “Getting to Know UU: History of Unitarian Universalism”

March 14: “Getting to Know BUC - Part I: History of BUC”

March 28: “Getting to Know BUC - Part II: BUC Now...w/ Special Guests!”

Everyone is welcome! GTKUU is great for newcomers and/or those considering membership. This interactive, introspective, informative, and fun set of four non-sequential classes has been adapted from our in-person course to a virtual model this year. Great for anyone interested in learning more about their own beliefs as well as those of others in this faith, and this community. If you plan to attend, please RSVP to Rob Davidson at kathy8082@gmail.com, but you can also just show up. Zoom access info is below and on the [calendar](#):

Zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/96471646118?pwd=eC94SkZlFRxNDZ6WEZsNGd5dHh4UT09>

Meeting ID: 964 7164 6118

Passcode: 792033

Dial-in: 253-215-8782

Mid-Winter Mixer and Game Night

Saturday, February 13 | 7:00 pm | Zoom

Come one, come all to our Mid-Winter Mixer and Game Nights! These will be taking place at 7:00 pm on the second Saturday of the month through April, and February’s event will be on Saturday, February 13 at 7:00 pm. Let’s start the month with a fun-filled evening of icebreakers and the game Kahoot! We’ll laugh and connect... then viciously compete for prizes. Hope to see all your shining faces there! Zoom access info is below and on the [calendar](#):

Zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/91506384659?pwd=c2JReFN6Ni9MWWREWkQxZjNKaVh5dz09>

Meeting ID: 915 0638 4659

Passcode: 178521

Dial-in: 253-215-8782

Stewardship

Get Ready to Celebrate Our Community!



Get ready for a completely re-invented stewardship campaign! As we adapt to the ongoing need for socially distant church events, the Stewardship Committee is planning a special event on Sunday, March 7, to mark the start of our annual pledge drive. We will “Celebrate Our Community” with an all-ages online event on March 7 following the Zoom church service.

As part of that event, we ask that congregants have their pledge form in hand on that day. Please [click here](#) to let

us know if you prefer to receive your pledge packet via email or postal mail (or look for the red button on our [website](#) to submit your preference).

You can also get your creativity flowing by presenting how you and your family have found support from the BUC community in the past year and how it will be a valuable part of your life going forward. On March 7, anyone who wants to may share their experience of what BUC has meant to them in the past year. Prizes for most creative presentation!

Help us “Celebrate Our Community” with your involvement on Stewardship Sunday and with your financial support. Even though we may not be in the building or seeing each other in person, we know that our church community has been essential during these difficult times.

We hope you show your gratitude for everything wonderful about our Beloved Community by participating in the financial health of our congregation.

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

February theme:

Devout Unitarian Universalism

<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=YzVMZzZpQTthb0lFUUVhYYlk5Vy8vZz09>

dial-in: 253-215-8782

meeting ID: 921 0301 5538

passcode: 016260

February Events

Vespers Service

Tuesday, February 2 | 7:00 pm

Live on the
[Birmingham Unitarian Church](#)
[Facebook page](#)

Getting to Know UU Session 1

Sunday, February 7 | 12:00 pm

[https://zoom.us/j/96471646118?
 pwd=eC94SkZlFRxNDZ6WEZsNGd5
 dHh4UT09](https://zoom.us/j/96471646118?pwd=eC94SkZlFRxNDZ6WEZsNGd5dHh4UT09)

dial-in: 253-215-8782
 meeting ID: 964 7164 6118
 passcode: 792033

Humanists of BUC

Sunday, February 14 | 7:00 p.m.

[https://zoom.us/j/93342225246?
 pwd=SVZUWUt6czF5TDMvaDFIUExiS
 UpPdZ09](https://zoom.us/j/93342225246?pwd=SVZUWUt6czF5TDMvaDFIUExiSUpPdZ09)

dial-in: 253-215-8782
 meeting ID: 933 4222 5246
 passcode: 280298

Deborah Drennan, CEO of [Freedom House Detroit](#), will be speaking on the topic of asylum seekers

Getting to Know UU Session 2

Sunday, February 21 | 12:00 pm

[https://zoom.us/j/96471646118?
 pwd=eC94SkZlFRxNDZ6WEZsNGd5
 dHh4UT09](https://zoom.us/j/96471646118?pwd=eC94SkZlFRxNDZ6WEZsNGd5dHh4UT09)

dial-in: 253-215-8782
 meeting ID: 964 7164 6118
 passcode: 792033

Issues and Ale

Friday, February 5 | 6:00 p.m.

[https://zoom.us/j/98764532801?
 pwd=cHgwVWc0R0ZBRi9Gc1M3
 WklNRXhkZz09](https://zoom.us/j/98764532801?pwd=cHgwVWc0R0ZBRi9Gc1M3WklNRXhkZz09)

dial-in: 253-215-8782
 meeting ID: 987 6453 2801
 passcode: 061537

Mixer and Game Night

Saturday, February 13 | 7:00 pm

[https://zoom.us/j/91506384659?
 pwd=c2JReFN6Ni9MWWREWkQx
 ZjNKaVh5dz09](https://zoom.us/j/91506384659?pwd=c2JReFN6Ni9MWWREWkQxZjNKaVh5dz09)

dial-in: 253-215-8782
 meeting ID: 915 0638 4659
 passcode: 178521

Confronting Racism

Tuesday, February 16 | 7:00 p.m.

[https://zoom.us/j/93729325877?
 pwd=MIJkMUNIZE4zQmtrT3VNbHJ
 2Ti8xdz09](https://zoom.us/j/93729325877?pwd=MIJkMUNIZE4zQmtrT3VNbHJ2Ti8xdz09)

dial-in: 253-215-8782
 meeting ID: 937 2932 5877
 passcode: 570711

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