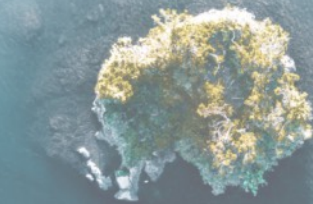




wayfinding

All the scientific knowledge that we have of this world, or ever will have, is as an island in the sea. Still the mystery surrounds us.

Chet Raymo



Soul Matters Sharing Circle

This month we open the Gift of Mystery.

We've all experienced it: the mystery of an ordinary moment that suddenly lit up and reminded you of the marvel and preciousness of being alive. It moved you from a feeling of "the same old, same old" to a feeling of dancing with the sacred. Or maybe you heard a voice in your head saying, "This matters most!" and "Don't forget this!" It added meaning to our lives and *defined* meaning at the same time.

With this in mind, spend some time this month reclaiming a handful of those mysteriously luminous moments. Here's a video to help you on your way:

The Moment: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNVPaINZD_I (From the Soul Matters study packet)

Reach out to Rev. Bob or Kevin Lausch to get this month's packet!

Social Justice Giving for December: [UUSC](#)



The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) is a nonprofit, nonsectarian organization advancing human rights together with an international community of grassroots partners and advocates.

Of current interest is their involvement in the Conference of Parties (COP) on climate change. "This year, UUSC is supporting nine organizations in attending COP. UUSC will also be supporting the creation of seven side events at COP this year to bring together faith leaders and climate activists in a shared space to strategize solutions around the crisis. For example, on December 4, UUSC Director of Advocacy, Global Displacement Salote Soqo will be participating in **a side event on feminist leadership in the climate justice movement.**" Read more at this link: <https://www.uusc.org/cop28/>

Minutes & More

For the **FULL Minutes**, the Treasurer's Report, the Operations Report and the Minister's report, please visit the [Board's Page](#) and select the reports you wish to view.

Present: Jill Beach, Glenn Cockerham, Ian Cowie, Mike Griffith, Phillip Thomason, Kay Webb, Rev. Bob Renjilian, RK Young and Gail Meyers.



Minister's Report – Rev. Bob included 12th century Jewish wisdom (Maimonides), nature-based readings, wisdom from Pema Chödrön (American Tibetan-Buddhist) and his reflections on Q'uran Sura 28 (which says the ungrateful never prosper) in the November services. *(Full report on the website.)*

Treasurer's Report – Mike Griffith reported that four months into the current fiscal year, UUTC's finances are in good condition. *(Full report on the website.)*

Operations Report – RK shared that a staff group will be attending two web-based sessions on digital security, and that UUTC has a new donor-partner to assist with funding summer camps. She also reported on professional development work of both Trisha and Chelsea to better prepare them for their roles. *(Full report on website.)*

Finance Committee – Gail Meyers, chair of the Finance Committee, shared a draft of the Committee's updated Operating Guidelines for Board review and approval.

Old Business: Minister-Ministry Review Update – A draft report has been completed, and Ian Cowie will meet with Rev. Bob before the report is shared with the Board in January.

Old Business: Safety Task Force – Capt. Aaron Thompson from the Brevard Police Dept met with the Safety Task Force and provided specific feedback on possible security precautions.

Old Business: Staff Holiday Bonuses – Board members agreed on a distribution of the donated funds to thirteen employees, staff volunteers and contractors.

Old Business: Sustainability & Other Funds – RK requested that Fund 8-Gifts & Memorials be closed and moved to a liability line in Fund 7-Capital Expenditures to streamline the accounting process. A motion was made, discussed and approved.

New Business: Campus Vision Task Force – Ian shared that the Task Force is requesting a workshop with Board members to bring them up to date with the progress of the campus vision before taking next steps in the process. A meeting date was set for Dec. 7, 2023, with a tentative time of 2pm-4pm, to be verified by the Task Force.

The next meeting of the Board is January 25, 2024 @ 5:30pm.



Connection in Community

Rev. Bob Renjilian

We are not alone. That was one of the clearest lessons from the special Thanksgiving events at UUTC.

It was wonderful to have representatives (and attendees) from various religious groups gathered at UUTC on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving for the Interfaith Service of Thanksgiving. Each speaker brought a different flavor to our “stone soup” service (a reference to a story Kevin Lausch read to us this month in worship). The connections UUTC has formed in community make a difference - this is true for the many years UUTC has been a part of “Power Up” with St. Philips and the Jewish community, and my post-COVID engagement with our neighboring religious leaders, for example, or the previous connection of Chalice Camp where Kevin invited Mayor Copelof to come speak to the children (setting the stage for another “yes” this time around). I think we were well suited to host this evening gathering due to our respect for many religious paths, but also because we truly want to make a difference in Brevard and Transylvania County and know it takes cooperation. When we say “Yes!” to such engagement we reinforce our reason for existence. A national church analyst often asks of consulting congregations “what would the surrounding community miss if your church wasn’t here?”, and I would respond: “UUTC would be missed for our willingness to connect and rise to occasions such as this!” Thank you all! If you missed the service you are invited to watch the recording posted online (many thanks Kathryn!): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PK9pjl6QsM>

We had another “We are not alone” event just two days later, our (first-ever?!) Thanksgiving Dinner at UUTC for any who were looking for friends (or “chosen family”) to share a meal together. Many thanks to Donna Reyburn and all who pulled off this event. This time it was a shared meal, with so many flavors. Just a few years ago this would have been impossible with COVID restrictions, so I suspect it was a particularly celebratory mood around the tables.

Thank you to all who help weave the fabric of community. Thank you to the volunteers, the cooks, the musicians, and all who do forms of outreach (and in-reach). Each time you invite another into the circle, it enriches us all.

See you at UUTC!

- Rev. Bob Renjilian

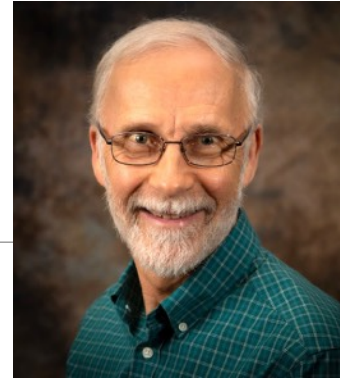
The world is so empty if one thinks only of mountains, rivers and cities; but to know someone who thinks and feels with us, and who, though distant, is close to us in spirit, this makes the earth for us an inhabited garden.”

– Goethe

President's Corner

Ian Cowie

Origami Cranes



Serving as president of a UU congregation is rewarding. The position provides insight into how a church functions. It could be time spent with the board secretary preparing an agenda; or, hearing from the minister ideas that will impact UUTC in positive ways; or, listening to church administrators explain for the third time the accounting rules about why it is not proper to move funds willy-nilly. A church president stands on the sidelines like a coach encouraging everyone to do their best when crafting a future. Recently, I experienced this with three different groups.

As the Safety Task Force started meeting, members soon realized their focus needed to change. Safety encompasses more than working smoke detectors or alerts about water leaks. Facts stared us in the face - most insurance claims were people falling rather than fires destroying property. It was all about the health and welfare of everyone. Much like meerkats where some in the group step aside to be sentinels to be alert and watchful. When danger appears, they sound an alarm to get others to scurry into tunnels. I am not saying we are similar. I think our approach for the safety of everyone is to be more aware of potential hazards anyone could encounter. Task force members are now exploring paths that could be adapted across the entire church.

The Campus Vision Task Force mission is about our future. Members are developing a plan to begin discussion fulfilling our UUTC vision. This will be the starting point to map how UUTC will serve everyone better. Expect in coming months many opportunities to share your ideas as we shape what this church community will be in 5, 10 or 20 years.

UUTC is always building and expanding its community. A few weeks ago, I came upon another group involved in a totally different project. Scattered across two tables were pieces of paper folded in various shapes. The members of this group were sharing their skills making paper cranes using the ancient origami method. The cranes, I understood, were to be shared with others—not just an enjoyable activity for the makers.

Learning to fold paper takes time. I recall a time years ago when I attempted to make my first paper airplanes. Compared to my older brother's slick planes that flew great distances, when launched my planes crashed at my feet. I was frustrated that I could not do better.

The cranes I saw were beautiful. For centuries people around the world have folded paper into origami shapes. Cranes symbolized a message of peace. Possibly each one of us in the coming year can take this message to share your talents to build peace throughout the world. A good place to start is right here at UUTC.

To learn how origami cranes became a symbol of peace, check out this story:

<https://blog.nationalgeographic.org/2015/08/28/how-paper-cranes-became-a-symbol-of-healing-in-japan/>

Events to Remember in December!

Saturday, December 9th, 4pm: Caroling & Cookies!

Come and join the whole congregation for a delightful time! We will be singing carols, sharing delicious homemade cookies, and enjoying each other's company. Bring cookies, don't bring cookies, all are welcome to come and have a great time. Wear your Christmas sweaters or other warm stuff so the photos will be spectacular! Carol lyrics available at

<http://uutc.org/christmas-carols>.

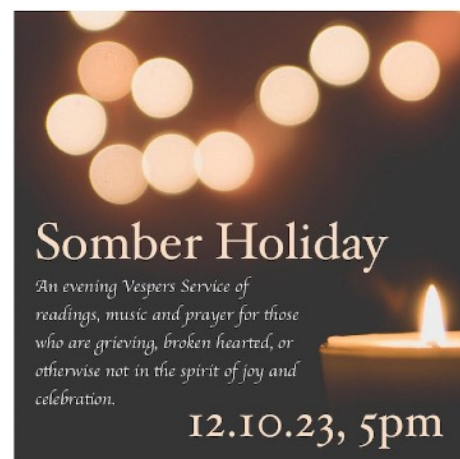


Souper Sunday: December 10th

Enjoy this kid-friendly, congregational shared meal. **If you can bring soup** or some other simple item to share for that day, **please sign up this Sunday at the front counter**—and thanks!

Vespers—Somber Holiday: December 10th, 5pm

An evening Vespers Service of readings, music and prayer for those who are grieving, broken hearted, or otherwise not in the spirit of joy and celebration.



Santa's Workshop: December 15th, 5-8pm

Kids aged 3 to 10 are invited to an evening of pizza, games, and making, while being supervised by our church staff and volunteers. Cost: \$20/child and \$10 for siblings. \$40 family max; scholarships are available. Email [Kevin](#) or [Trisha](#)!



Embrace Your Inner Pagan: Winter Solstice, December 21, 5pm

Unlike Christmas Eve services, this service will not be live-streamed, as such a thing would be antithetical to these practices. Prepare for Solstice and the birth of the sun— this service includes music, readings and dance.

Candlelight Service: December 24th, 5pm

Sunday morning on the 24th will be our traditional

intergenerational service. In the evening, we are bumping up the time to 5pm instead of 6pm.

Wishing you many joys in this month!





Who Leads?

RK Young

I have a favorite reading from our hymnal. OK, I have a lot of favorite readings. But I really do like this one—Impassioned Clay, by Ralph N. Helverson, #654.

Embedded in this reading are these two sentences: *We have religion when we stop deluding ourselves that we are self-sufficient, self-sustaining, or self-derived. We have religion when we hold some hope beyond the present, some self-respect beyond our failures.* We could argue about what the author means by “religion,” but in these two

statements I find qualities that make good leaders. Those who have humility enough to believe in their need for community, and also strength enough to create hope for the future.

Another favorite reading is #567 To Be of Use, by Marge Piercy. This one speaks to me of what it is like to serve on our Teams, Committees and the Board. *“I want to be with people who submerge in the task... Who are not parlor generals and field deserters but move in a common rhythm when the food must come in or the fire be put out. ... Greek amphoras for wine or oil, Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums—but you know they were made to be used. The pitcher cries for water to carry and a person for work that is real.”*

UUTC operates under a shared leadership model, where the Board and its Committees handle policy and budgetary matters, and the Minister and Ministry Teams do the work of running programming and caring for our Mission, our People and our Campus. This is the time of year when the Congregation’s Nominations Committee is seeking leaders to “become submerged in the task” for a period of time on the Board. Staff has, with the move to Realm Accounting, ensured that (for instance) the task of Treasurer is not the bugaboo it once was. Please be open to this possibility—I look forward to working with whomever says “yes!”

We also have need of a new person’s vision on the Administration Committee and new workers for many teams. Covid really put a hurt on Teams and on the regular transition of membership in all our Committees because everything moved online that could, and those committee members couldn’t easily recruit new members. Some folks have been in their positions coming up on 6 years. Could you spell them for one?

Unitarian Universalism is, by Principle, a democratically run institution. It grows and thrives where all voices are heard. Service on Teams, Committees or the Board creates the monthly “forum” where decisions are made and your vision can be focused on the issues before you. Because when *“the food must come in or the fire be put out”* is where your voice is of greatest value. Where you have been doing the work is where you, rightly, should have authority.

I’d like to hold up the Grow Getters this month — they have a deep, 7th Principle-based vision for our campus, which they have been working on since 2020. Water protection, habitat creation, and the creation of beauty for all to enjoy and be spiritually uplifted. Unlike most groups, they have met weekly to do this work. Sometimes they get rained out, but most Tuesday mornings you will find them planting, pruning, weeding, tending. The fruits of their labor are becoming more and more obvious, and an application is being put together to achieve NC Native Plant Society Certification as a Native Plant Habitat. I learned last week that we have 4 different types of moss on the grounds. Mind boggling!

We are coming into a period of change. It’s going to be engaging, challenging and exciting. If you have not joined a Team, consider it. If you are called to serve on a Committee or the Board, please consider how your voice may be the difference maker—we all have a wealth of experiences that come to bear, and you never know which of those will make you the source of inspiration for direction. Be present—and step up in love to help carry the water.