



wayfinding

In some Native languages the term for plants translates to “those who take care of us.”

Robin Wall Kimmerer

Soul Matters

The Gift of Interdependence

- ◆ Do you think age impacts the way we *connect with* the interdependent web?
- ◆ How does climate anxiety or grief show up in your life?
- ◆ Do you feel that “sacrifice” has a central role to play in addressing the climate crisis?
- ◆ When was the last time you became thoroughly absorbed in the curiosity of understanding [another creature's life](#)?

Contact [Rev. Bob](#) for a packet or to be notified for the next discussion.

Social Justice Giving for April: [The Children's Center](#)

The Children's Center has many programs designed to improve the lives of children of Transylvania County. We partner with parents and a variety of agencies that work with children to help accomplish our goals.

Our Mission is to create, maintain, and operate a center that shall coordinate a multidisciplinary approach for services for children who are at risk of, or victims of, neglect and abuse in Transylvania County.

The Children's Center provides for emergency assistance, interagency case management, and a safe space for family visitations. They provide programming designed to promote good parenting and safe and stable homes. They work to preserve the dignity and safety of children who must enter the foster care system.



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, Ian Cowie, Marge Doty, Vicki Held, Nancy Richards, Kay Webb, Rev. Bob, RK Young, and Vanessa Cowie, and Gail Meyers.

Minister's Report – Rev. Bob reported working with the pastor at the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd and representatives of other congregations to plan an ecumenical Earth Day observance which will be held at the County Library at the amphitheater if the weather holds.

Treasurer's Report – Gail, chair of Finance, projected that we will end the fiscal year with a surplus, assuming all FY 23-24 pledges are fulfilled.

Operations Report – From meetings with Kevin & Trisha, RK reported that they wish to rebrand CRE as "Family Ministry," with Kevin's position titled "Director of Family Ministry," feeling this is a more inclusive name for the services they provide. The Board consensus was to support this change. On the issue of Facilities, RK requested permission to move forward with creating a liability line in the Capital fund for a Sponsored Project to fund the replacement of the two sanctuary egress doors; the bid for replacement is approximately \$6800.

Old Business: Format for Minister's Report – The Board consensus was to discontinue the previous format of the Minister's Report which was based on the Ministry Annual Review. Instead, Rev. Bob will highlight those things he feels pertinent and relevant to the Board.

Old Business: Finance Committee Update on Mortgage – It was confirmed that First Citizen's is offering the best rate for the refinance, a 6.45% ARM. (This was made necessary by an increase in our current loan to 9.25%). The refinanced loan would restrict the amount of prepayment without penalty in the first 3 years of the loan. The balance of the current loan is approximately \$250,000. Board Officers will follow up with bank officials to start the process of refinancing.

New Business: Requests for GA Delegates – Ian announced that it is time to publicize UUA's next General Assembly (GA) and ask that UUTC Members consider serving as delegates to GA, which is a virtual event this year.

New Business: Facilities Team Operating Guidelines – Kay explained that a revised operating procedure of the Facilities Team required Board approval. The revision to procedure #8 was increasing the insurance deductible from \$5000 to our current insurance deductible of \$10,000. The motion was approved.

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

(Extensive business was done— you are encouraged to check the Board's Page linked above for the complete minutes.)





The Gift of Interdependence

Rev. Bob Renjilian

April brings Earth Day, and a reminder of our Unitarian Universalist principle about the “interdependent web of all existence” and our part in it.

We have a hymn that says “Earth Was Given as a Garden”, and we’ll sing it in worship, of how this home of ours is “a cradle of humanity... home for all creatures of land and sky and sea... all to live in harmony.” It reminds me that

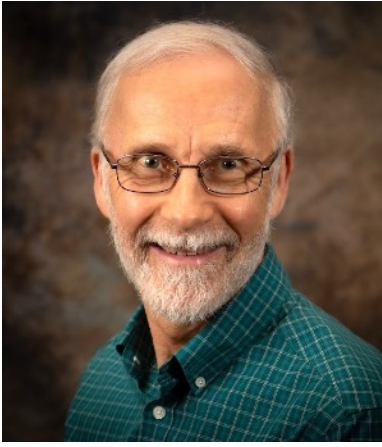
we have a lot of responsibility to care and tend the garden, and recognize how bound up we are with everyone and everything.

Another hymn asks us to build bridges “between our divisions” and speaks from the heart hoping “if I reach out to you, will you reach out to me?” That’s a counter-cultural message in a society which mistakenly preaches independence and a refusal to admit vulnerability. We are better off being maladjusted to such a society, and I urge us to take to heart that we need one another to survive - in other words be transformative within and among our circles of relatedness.

So what are we doing this month? We’ll have the usual ongoing support groups, study circles, gardening work, and singing harmony in choir. We’ll have a Wonderful Wednesday on April 10 appropriate to Earth Day themes, and later in the month we’ll enjoy the chance to join with Lutherans, Methodists, Episcopalians, etc. in a combined post-Earth Day service (planned for Sunday, April 21). Behind the scenes some of our folks will make sure The Haven has a meal, and help with the gardens on The Haven’s grounds. And a few will be part of building connections in other parts of the county.

I urge us all to reflect on bonds of friendship, love of nature, and a shared sense of “being in this all together” this month. Interdependence means thriving. If you are feeling isolated, give me a call - because we are not alone.





President's Corner—General Assembly Is for Everyone

Ian Cowie

Unitarian Universalism is a living tradition. We grow and change with the times. It is important to know our roots, our priorities and the scope of our religion. We can learn from connecting with the larger movement, and discerning what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist. It is a rewarding experience each day to be on this journey with you.

Across the country, over 1,000 UU congregations voluntarily belong to the Unitarian Universalist Association. UUA's mission is to equip congregations for health and vitality, to support and train lay and professional leaders, and to advance Unitarian Universalist values in the world.

For more than 60 years, UU congregations have sent delegates to the UUA annual meeting known as General Assembly (GA). At that meeting the business of the Association is conducted. This includes organizational business such as bylaws and elections. It also provides opportunities to learn and explore topics related to our religion. There are workshops, worship services and lectures.

I have participated in several GA's traveling to Ohio, Missouri, Washington and Pennsylvania. During pandemic years, I "hung out" with my fellow GA delegates from home. Besides learning new challenging musical pieces (some the UUTC choir sings), I enjoy being part of the sound in the 100+ member choir. Our voices are heard by thousands - those in the convention center hall and UU congregations across the country.

I have also been a voting delegate. Hearing the various points of views during GA business sessions, I have a deeper appreciation for how democracy works. It was thrilling last year to cast my vote for the new UUA president and, then, to be part of the installation ceremony where hundreds of delegates "laid their hands" on Rev. Sofia Betancourt.

I have experienced the power of witness with each GA. In Columbus I was swept up with the energizing messages from Rev. William Barber as he advocated for poor people. In Spokane, hundreds of delegates marched to a nearby park to demonstrate unfair treatment of formerly incarcerated citizens.

The **Ware Lecture** is another GA highlight. A nationally known leader in a field related to our values speaks. I have heard journalist-broadcaster Krista Tippett, Canadian author Naomi Klein, voting rights activists Stacey Abrams and Desmond Meade, historian Ibram X. Kendi. I look forward to hearing thoughts from this year's speaker - Rabbi Julia Watts Belser.

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The 63rd GA theme is “**Love Unites, Stories Ignite,**” a powerful reminder of the core principles that unite us as Unitarian Universalists. Our faith has always been rooted in the power of storytelling. GA delegates will explore how our stories can ignite change, inspire compassion, and help us build a more just and equitable world. Through storytelling, we share our experiences, our dreams, our struggles, and our triumphs. It is through these stories that we can find common ground, deepening our understanding of one another and the world around us.

General Assembly begins Thursday, June 20 and runs through Sunday, June 23. This year it is done virtually - there is no need to travel. *I encourage you to look into being a GA delegate and see how you can grow from the experience.*

Register for General Assembly <https://www.uua.org/ga>

Learn more about the Ware Lectures: <https://www.uua.org/ga/program/highlights/ware-lecture>

“Do not be too timid and squeamish about your actions.”
-Ralph Waldo Emerson

Spring Cleaning



There are running jokes among administrators about how various things “breed” at churches— things like vases and baskets, umbrellas and jackets, serving utensils, small food containers... you get the idea. We are fortunate when we have in our members those who recognize the impending avalanche and work to stop the tragedy before it befalls us. ;)

This week I have been fortunate to be aided by some kitchen angels and some closet angels so that Stuff That Overwhelmeth is given a new home — or moved into trash if that is its inevitable destination. There is no point in donating what is definitely going to be thrown away. An excess of things isn’t the same as a surplus— a surplus of toilet paper is a happy problem. An excess of old food storage containers — maybe not.

Another area of spring cleaning, which Kevin, Kathryn and I worked on, was the identification of old computer stuff of no use to anyone (trash) and old computer stuff that could have another life (Through the Trees). A recent article in the Wall Street Journal pointed out the vulnerability of aging computer architecture—old computers are easier to hack or exploit. That might be OK for a teenager who just needs to do some classwork, or a startup that needs to be able to do some accounting, but for a

church that has a database of members... not the best choice. So three computers that have reached an age have been purged of all things UUTC and have been donated to Through the Trees.

So this Sunday, when you come to church, maybe check the “closet” for a jacket left behind, or maybe one of the three umbrellas on the shelf above belong to you— or maybe you are the owner of one of the water bottles left behind? Help us stem the avalanche—and thank you!

Democracy Is Important — Practice It at GA!

RK Young

Every member congregation of the Unitarian Universalist Association has the right to send Delegates to the UUA General Assembly annually. These delegates function as Representatives, listening, debating and VOTING on the policies presented during the week of General Assembly. Delegates also can choose other enrichment, so it's not all work and no play.

UUTC, based on its size, may send four member Delegates to do this work. This is the literal work of the 5th Principle: The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.

This year, serving as a delegate can be accomplished from the comfort of your best chair at home— this is a year of Virtual General Assembly. You must be a Member of UUTC and be willing and able to spend some time of study on what will demand your vote. There will be no talking heads on TV giving you their suggestions on the best course of action— we need your **heart and your brain** to represent UUTC.

Don't take my word for the value of attending—read this short confession at the link: <https://www.uua.org/central-east/blog/better-together/why-ga-2024>

Talk to UUTC Members Ian and Vanessa Cowie, Michael Solomon, Susan Zelle, Susan Slocum... these folks have served as Delegates within recent memory. Ask what they enjoyed and what felt important. Consider this, and then talk to President Ian Cowie or Rev. Bob about serving in this way. Once candidates are selected, I will issue the credentials which are necessary for voting GA attendees.

You can, of course, attend GA without being a Delegate. But right now, the Board is looking for a few good people. Be one of them!

Church Insurance In Trouble for Many

Nationwide, homeowners have been enduring rising costs to insurance... or being cut off altogether. Everyone is scrambling to deal with the fallout.

The same, unfortunately, is true of churches. While this is hitting coastal churches more than others, many congregations are having to figure out how to handle the new landscape. This year, UUTC's insurance cost jumped by \$2000, and our deductible jumped by \$5000. But we're one of the lucky ones. We still *HAVE* insurance. The UUA is even considering "self-insuring" member congregations who cannot find an insurer —it is that bad. At least one UU congregation on this side of the state has been dropped already.

Climate change is hitting insurers in the wallet, and they are now being pretty quick to cut policy holders who have cost them big dollars. Your staff is continuing to assess risk factors to stay ahead of this curve.

A Digital Castle Wall

Imagine that your phone is a gateway to other people — people you can call, people you interact with on social media, apps that help you manage your investments... oh, wait— IT IS!

Now imagine that lots of people are assembled in one place and their devices are all connecting to WiFi and the hardware is a bit old. Oh, wait — it is!! Or it *WAS*. Wednesday evening the awesome twosome of Mark Allison and Kathryn Burleigh removed our old wifi mesh network, which had reached the age of “no further updates being made.” They then installed a new mesh network, which comes armed with a number of security measures.

We try to make UUTC a space free of worry. Part of your gifts go to maintain the systems we (now) all rely on. What you don't need is an information system setup that is weakened by no-longer-serviceable firmware. Firmware is permanent software programmed into Read-Only Memory. Firmware updates, pushed out by the device manufacturer, are how all smart devices can receive new programming instructions... until they can't. Once they can no longer be updated, they become vulnerable to all manner of bad actors.



The mad scientists, plotting installation options

A computer that Kevin had been using was manufactured in 2011. A laptop purchased after I started my employment at UUTC was manufactured in 2016. The recommended “replacement rate,” to avoid security threats and increased hours spent on upkeep, is 5 years. So that is one thing we've been working on— replacing a device a year to get us closer to a manageable upgrade budget. Next year we have a big one to upgrade (manufactured in 2019) — the AV computer. Fortunately I can squeeze a couple more years out of it in some other, less complicated, capacity. But the job it does is mission critical, and they need new hardware designed for their specific needs. This computer was purchased before the pandemic...things changed!

What Kathryn and Mark are doing is isolating our network so that no one can reach the devices connected to our router (printers and other devices are often weak spots that can be exploited for access) and putting even our “UUTC Open” wifi that many of you make use of behind a sort of digital castle wall to make us a real bother to try to hack. Go Team!

In other security news, Realm has rolled out something I am very happy to see — **the ability to login using your Google or Apple login**. I think this will go a long, long way to reducing frustrations with this software. It will also make it more secure. The less we all have to remember the better, right? **To make that work, IF** your Apple ID email is different from your Realm email, let me know, and I will add that email as your “account” email. Give me a holler if you have any questions! I haven't run a Realm class for awhile, but if I get word of enough interest, we'll roll it out again. —RK



Living Interdependently

RK Young

UUTC was founded by a number of people who thought beyond themselves. As we grew, so did these numbers. How do we know this? Well, they recycled a building. They bought ceramic dishes, not disposable ones. And a number of them purchased hybrid vehicles when such things became available.

For hundreds of years (outside of indigenous people), homo sapiens did not understand the relationship between plants and other species—encouraging monocultures of crops, planting of exotics in the home landscape, you name it. In the last few years, however, individuals and governments have been sounding the alarm about what this loss of diversity will do to humankind and other species.

Recently, some very concrete things have begun to happen. Effective January 1st of 2024, North Carolina law requires the planting of native species on government property. This is an enormous shift from a government that encouraged the planting of things like Callery Pear and Chinese Miscanthus (silver grass) along highways. These two species alone have done enormous damage— and continue to do so. But at least NC government will stop its own toxic use of these plants. Now if they would just prohibit the sale of invasive exotics in our retail establishments!

UUTC and its members can continue to lobby, especially with our County government, for the need to prohibit invasive exotics and encourage the planting of native species. But we have power to help ourselves and the other species of Transylvania County through the use of land we control— our own campus and our own home landscapes.

Given that most of us aren't endowed with huge chunks of land to work, we can get the most bang for our buck by maintaining or planting Keystone Species. Keystone species play an out-size role in providing food for many layers of species. A keystone species can be an oak tree (supports up to 600 different species!), or a beaver, which engineers habitats that other animals and plants rely on to survive.

Never fear, our Grow Getters are not going to introduce a pair of beavers to the UUTC campus. But they and the Facilities Team are taking aggressive steps (and by that I mean they are doing hard work and spending when necessary) to, for instance, preserve the health of the large white oak on Varsity Street—and spending many, many hours of labor keeping exotic invasive species from retaking a hold on the campus.

The average homeowner may not have much land to work with, but, by learning what species are invasive and removing them from that land, you are part of the solution. When you get drawn into the local nursery at this enticing time of year and choose plants that are native, or are native cultivars, you are part of the solution. Plant something that fruits, like a serviceberry tree or an American beautyberry shrub, and you are actively saving songbirds. To learn more, pickup a handout from the front counter on Sunday.

We have to think interdependently...about our landscapes...about our impact...for all of us.