



# wayfinding

When we identify where our privilege intersects with somebody else's oppression, we'll find our opportunities to make real change.

Ijeoma Oluo

## Soul Matters

### The Gifts of Justice & Equity

"To understand the causes of poverty, we must look beyond the poor. Those of us living lives of privilege and plenty must examine ourselves... Most government aid goes to families that need it the least. If you add up the amount that the government is dedicating to tax breaks ... you learn that we are doing so much more to subsidize affluence than to alleviate poverty... And this is the way we designed it." - Matthew Desmond

**DISCUSSION!** Join with Rev. Bob on Wednesday morning, Feb. 21 10:00am-11:30am for a discussion of this month's Soul Matters topic. Materials will be provided, but advanced reading of the packet (available from [Rev. Bob](#)) is recommended. You are invited to stay for lunch (BYO).

## Social Justice Giving for January: Bread of Life

The mission of the Bread of Life Free Community Kitchen is to provide nutritious meals in a safe and secure environment and to share our food with those in need in Transylvania County. Noon meals are available daily for anyone who walks through the door. Food boxes are available the first Friday of every month. Emergency food boxes offered other days of the month by special request. Will deliver food to persons with physical and mental disabilities or the elderly and home-bound. Must preregister for meal delivery through an interview in the office or a referral from DSS. Provides a holiday meal on Thanksgiving 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Help care for those most in need!



# 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, Vicki Held, Mike Griffith, Kay Webb, Rev. Bob, RK Young, and congregants Vanessa Cowie, Elena Hearn and Nancy Richards.

**Minister's Report** – Rev. Bob will be giving the Invocation at the start of the City Council meeting this week. He continues to serve on the UUA's Religious Education Credentialing Committee. He has been an active part of the Campus Vision Task Force meetings. Read the full report at the link above.

**Treasurer's Report** – Mike Griffith reported that UUTC's finances are in good condition. He noted that requests for FY 24-25 spending by Teams have been made and anticipates presenting a full draft budget in March. He also made a motion to appoint Marge Doty to fill the Treasurer-Elect vacancy— the motion was approved.

**Operations Report** — RK reported that Chelsea has accepted an additional (salaried w/benefits) position, so she will be in the office with RK on Sundays. Both Trisha & Chelsea are continuing their schooling to increase their competencies. RK is working with Kathryn Burleigh on network security measures.

**Old Business: Insurance Review Update** – Ian reported that Church Mutual, UUTC's insurance provider, announced an increase of the deductible to \$10K and a premium increase of \$1637 to raise the total annual premium to \$7037. Treasurer Mike Griffith and Finance Committee member Rick Laws reviewed the current Church Mutual policy, and they recommend staying with Church Mutual for insurance coverage.

**Old Business: Minister-Ministry Review Update** – See page 6.

**Old Business: Bylaws Revision** — The Board approved recommended revisions to the current Bylaws and **strongly encourage Members to attend the February 15th Forum** to discuss the contents of these revisions.

**New Business: Resignation of President-Elect** — Ian Cowie reported that Phillip Thomas had resigned due to health reasons. Glenn Cockerham made a motion to accept Phillip's resignation, Mike seconded; the motion was approved. Phillip was recognized for his service and Board members wished him well. Glenn then made a motion to appoint Nancy Richards to fill the position of President-Elect—the motion was approved.

**New Business: Performance & Compensation Reviews** — Staff reviews will occur in February followed by compensation reviews in March. The Board was informed in December of new compensation guidelines from the UUA which will have budgetary impacts.

The next meeting of the Board is February 22, 2024 @ 5:30pm.





## High Tech Aids for Church Engagement

### Rev. Bob Renjilian

Justice and Equity demand we eliminate the barriers to participation, regardless of disability, age, etc. Over the years, this congregation installed a system to help feed clear audio to T-Coil hearing aids in the sanctuary, put a ramp up to the pulpit area, made curb cutouts at the outside sidewalks, and converted most front parking spaces to Handicap or Limited Mobility signage.

In addition (and not as well known) we've obtained a portable microphone system that can be used in small-group meetings for folks to use headphones or the T-coil setting. The pandemic taught us to go online as well, helping us reach a good number of folks (and we keep providing that option).

Privately (and I put into use in my last congregation) I've shown off a way to provide "closed caption" speech-to-text on smartphones and tablets as well. This came in handy for deaf and hard-of-hearing congregants, and the Unitarian Universalist Association posted my instructions for others (of any denomination) to add this service. If you come for a pastoral appointment and want to see large-type what I'm saying, just ask! I'm hoping we'll make this work in larger settings too.

Some congregants already know of personal mobility devices that have long battery life, can lift the seating position to reach higher, and can be set up to dock in wheel chair vans. I don't remember anything so advanced as this back when I started ministry.

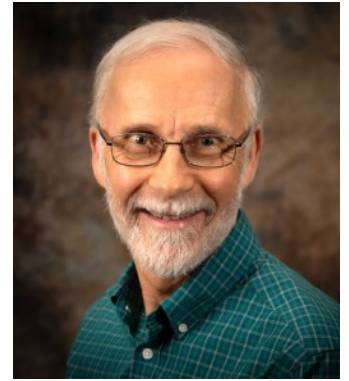
Also what I didn't realize until December is that there are tech aids that make driving easier too. While car-pooling is still the best (and most connective) way to get to church when you're reducing your own driving, it is nice to know there is new stuff that might be available or just around the corner. I remember several years ago (in a different congregation) a man had reached the stage where his family was concerned he might need to stop driving. He had the means to get a Tesla with driving assistance options, and convinced his children that it was enough to keep him (and others) safe on the road (and he made use of drive-share services if weather or darkness were factors). Back then this was very expensive, but I've now learned there is a device which can attach to the windshield of up-to-date regular-priced cars for about \$1,500 (maybe ten times less than what Tesla charged back then). Still too expensive and experimental? - Perhaps now, but I'm guessing these will be ubiquitous in the future.

I'm writing to our elected representatives to suggest that driving laws and licensing requirements might need to be changed to allow for these assistive devices. We're a very car-centric society, and retaining the ability to come to church (or work, or the grocery store) are essentials. I know that my license says I have to wear corrective lenses, for example. I'd like our laws to expand so we can imagine new categories which show driving is allowed if the person helps pilot a "level 2" (partial automation- humans paying attention) or higher driving assistance car (where the car/computer is paying most of the attention).

In the meantime, if there is anything holding you back from coming to services, or getting the full value of them, please let me know. See you at church!

# President's Corner—“Roses Every Day”

Ian Cowie



*In a world where hate and oppression make claim to religious truth, Unitarian Universalism offers love, democracy, and compassionate justice. A bequest will bring you joy and will strengthen and extend our faith.*

I was struck by this statement after learning that UUTC would be a recipient of a future gift from some members. It got me thinking: what is a bequest to a church and who can really do this? The formal definition of a bequest is the act of giving or leaving something. The giving takes effect after the donor's death. There are instructions for how assets should be distributed after the donor is gone. Think of it as your last act of generosity.

Bequests are for everyone and anyone. They should be both sensible and simple gifts. You can use your will to give a specific dollar amount, a percentage of your estate, or a specific item like property. **Some bequests are quite unique.** Comedian Jack Benny's will included a provision for his wife to receive one red rose every day for the rest of her life. This lasted nine years. An attorney's final wish was to try to build a library where no women were allowed. Then, there are the situations when a person gives their entire fortune to a pet (Note: Everything you read on the internet may not be true).

Bequests and other estate gifts come in all shapes and sizes and are as different as the people who create them. Some bequests are unrestricted, given for general purposes while other bequests are restricted, given for very specific purposes, such as the permanent endowment or a building fund. Each one of us has benefited from somebody else's generosity. Each of us has the opportunity to do the same for others that follow us. Even a small bequest can be meaningful and beneficial. It is not all about millionaires giving away their fortunes.

Like it or not when we look at the UUTC community, we find ourselves in a unique category of givers. While the practice to leave your assets to others has been around for centuries, recent trends in who and how people bequeath their wealth are rapidly evolving.

More people are sharing their resources as charitable bequests. Baby boomers, a generation known for its social consciousness, are reaching peak age to direct their wealth to charities they care about. Causes like environmental protection, education, and global health are attracting significant charitable bequests. More people are increasingly interested in using their bequests to make a measurable impact on the world. Donors are seeking to invest their assets in ways that align with their values.

Overall, the trends in bequests suggest a growing desire among individuals to use their wealth to make a positive impact on the world, both during their lifetime and after their death. This is leading to a more diverse and dynamic landscape for philanthropy, with new opportunities and challenges for both donors and charitable organizations.

If you are considering setting up a bequest, it is important to consult with a qualified estate planning attorney to ensure that your wishes are carried out. Keep in mind anyone with assets can consider a bequest, regardless of their age, wealth, or background.

***Continued next page....***

Bequests are not always set up through traditional wills but also with retirement accounts and life insurance policies. Individuals generally contribute assets they have accumulated during their lifetimes (savings, investments, real estate, retirement plan benefits, life insurance policies, and tangible personal property) — rather than giving from annual income (writing a check to meet your pledge commitment).

Planned gifts generally are meant to perpetuate something of great value and meaning. A planned gift is the ultimate one a person can make, both in size and finality.

Anyone can make a meaningful gift to UUTC in their will. Regardless of the amount, your bequest is a statement of faith. Faith that our UU movement and its voice for compassionate justice and religious freedom are important now - and will be important long after we are gone.

[“Use Your Will to Give to Unitarian Universalism”](#)

## Adopting the 8th Principle

Five months ago, Rev. Bob asked us as a congregation to consider another journey — that of adopting the 8th Principle. At our **Special Congregational Meeting Sunday, February 18**, we will vote to adopt this new principle into our bylaws. There will be a **forum to discuss** all the bylaw changes on **Thursday, February 15, 5:30 pm** in the sanctuary.

Our country and communities are steeped in racism and other oppressions. The commitments embodied in the 8th Principle are needed to counter the racism in our culture.



The 8th Principle reads: ***“We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.”***

When the Unitarians and Universalists came together in 1961, six principles were set in place. Twenty-four years later, revisions were made to the principles and a seventh principle was added. These principles are in UUTC’s bylaws. In 2013, it was becoming clear that a person can believe they are being a “good UU” and following the 7 Principles without thinking about or dealing with racism and other oppressions. Today, about 22% of UU congregations have adopted the 8th Principle.

The Board of Trustees welcome your comments and ideas how UUTC can grow and become more inclusive. Please attend the forum. The UU Association has [resources to be better informed](#).

I look forward to seeing you on the 15th.

Ian Cowie

President, UUTC Board of Trustees

# Ministry Evaluation 2023

The annual ministry review is linked to our goals, vision, and mission. I would like to thank members of the Review Task Force who provided their talents to complete this year's effort: Phillip Thomason, Trisha Wesley, Kelly Alwin, and Phil Stewart. The Task Force mailed surveys, tallied results, read each comment and reported on findings. Forty-eight percent of the surveys were returned.

The twenty-one question survey touched upon six areas - Pulpit and Worship, Pastoral Care and Presence, Community Building, Spiritual Growth, Educational Leadership and Social Justice. Your responses were looked at on a scale for easier understanding. Areas with scores above 70 were considered relative strengths; below 70 were possible improvement targets.

You can find the complete report that was reviewed by the Board of Trustees by following [this link](#).

Overall results showed the average score for the different areas to be 74.9 suggesting our teams and Minister are fulfilling the Congregation's expectations.

**Pulpit and Worship:** Comments reflect a deeper appreciation of the weekly services being provided. Congregants' experiences with the minister are positive and productive. But, a small number of respondents felt sermons need more relevance and to be more spiritually challenging.

**Pastoral Care and Presence:** The minister is building strong ties with congregants and the community. There are high marks when it comes to the minister's role with pastoral care and using community resources.

**Community-Building:** The minister continues to build a stronger community. Building a deeper connection with more members and friends will grow the congregation.

**Spiritual Growth:** Seen as a strong force throughout the congregants, spiritual growth continues to be a major part of people attending services. Some members would like some celebrations highlighted more.

**Educational Leadership:** In order to grow into a larger congregation and outreach to more people within our community, leadership roles need to be more defined. A leadership development and training program needs to be more prominent to nurture new leaders.

**Social Justice:** As one of the strongest areas for congregational feedback, particularly in the realm of LGBTQ+ support, there are noted opportunities available to demonstrate initiative in community involvement, specifically with particular disenfranchised or marginalized populations.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Ministry Evaluation effort.

Ian Cowie, Board of Trustees President  
Representing the Ministry Evaluation Task Force

# Chalice Lighters (Southern Region)



The Chalice Lighter program began in 1984 as a way for individuals to extend our faith by making a donation of \$10 or more for three calls per year. The new program works similarly, allowing individuals and congregations to support and be generous with one another to work on transformational goals. Chalice Lighter calls are crowd-funded contributions given by committed Unitarian Universalist "Chalice Lighters" and Southern Region congregations. Anyone can become a Chalice Lighter — just **join the Chalice Lighter email list and respond with a contribution when a call goes out.**

The new approach continues to support personal generosity. Additionally, it encourages congregations to participate in Chalice Lighter calls, by a "share the plate" offering or other special gift solicitation—because we know we are stronger together!

The Southern Region's Chalice Lighter team comprises volunteers from each of the four historic districts, and will evaluate and select Chalice Lighter call applications. In keeping with the times, all our work will be done via email and social media. The Chalice Lighter team will monitor each call's progress and receive a report from the congregation on its total receipts and how funds are being utilized. There will be up to two calls for each of our Region's historic geographical districts plus one additional call for a Region-wide effort each year—for a possible total of nine calls. The Chalice Lighter Team will notify us all of each call. (We do not limit the number of calls a donor contributes toward, but anticipate most donors will give to the two calls for congregations in their geographical district and to the one Region-wide call.) As before, each call will have a launch and end date.

## [Sign up to become a Chalice Lighter!](#)

## Which Projects Are Eligible?

Projects eligible for a Chalice Lighter call include UUA member, APF Honor, congregations seeking:

- To hire first time professional religious leadership (a minister, a religious educator, or other religious professional);
- To acquire land/building or to build a new building;
- To make ADA improvements to their current facilities;
- To support an inclusive wider community social justice project;
- To support a newly affiliated UUA Member Congregation;
- Other innovative projects may be considered. *(This article comes from the [UUA/Chalice Lighter website.](#))*

UUTC is a UUA Member Congregation, and an APF Honor congregation—meaning that we fully support the UUA Annual Program Fund, meeting this commitment from our budget annually. UUTC benefitted from a Chalice Lighter grant early in our history. And, in 2003, we were welcomed into the Jordan-Willis Circle of Commitment, which represented Chalice Lighter participation by more than 40% of the congregation. (!)



We are a fortunate congregation with a settled, full-time minister, a full time administrator, and a solid balance sheet. We are a congregation of amazing generosity. Let's renew our early commitment to the Southern Region Chalice Lighters as we approach our 25th anniversary. **Sign up at the link above!**



## Multiple Events a Week...

### RK Young

This past Tuesday was wet, cold...and dead as a door nail at UUTC. AND YET — we are averaging between 12-15 events a week in terms of groups and events—and I'm not counting Sunday services. Gracious—are we getting popular?

One of this week's groups was the Safety Task Force, wrapping up its work to make recommendations to the Board, which they will address later this month.

Contrary to what some might imagine, the group is not proposing aggressive measures. Their proposals are primarily the types of non-intrusive things you do for safety like installing ADA compliant curbs. In other words, things that protect us from ourselves, with the occasional outside force influencing decisions. To help you understand this, I'll call your attention to the two times in very recent memory in which the Post Office has been forced to rebuild its front wall because somebody put their foot on the wrong pedal in their car. Do they know you can spend about \$1000 for bollards and not have to do that again? Regardless of what the Board chooses to do, I can say with confidence that they will not rush into anything—and in fact are quite likely to take things a step at a time.

UUTC's leaders have planned intentionally since the purchase of this building. A Broad street location, with stone architectural features to boot. A fresh air exchange system, to improve our indoor air quality. Investments in our audio/visual capabilities, which are now super important to a lot of people—and getting us a reputation for supportive infrastructure. (*We will be hosting/renting to another group in March because of our assets (both human and techie) in this area.*) Your Campus Vision Task Force, which rolled out a survey last month, is attempting to be just as strategic and intentional. There are known deficits to our limited space, but just as all the rest of our infrastructure changes, whatever comes next will be incremental and targeted. Our Mission isn't to have some enormous debt. It is to support you, first and foremost, in your spiritual journey, regardless of your chosen trail. Our work together to promote social, economic and environmental justice *comes out of your spiritual journeys*. Planning helps us make manifest the spaces you need to do your work.

As UUTC approaches its 25th birthday, it really is time for all of us to engage strategically. What comes in the next 50 years? Engage with your children and grandchildren—where do they like to spend time, and why? What do you like best about UUTC, and is there something we could do to make that thing stronger? What do you like the idea of, and what do you think you would actually use? What has no value for you at all?

The final 7 questions are Vision questions that help us know your Values, rather than your perceptions. Your answers will reveal something about the path you envision for UUTC. Each statement of the survey is a sliding scale from 1 to 5. Selecting **1** tells us you really disagree with that statement. Selecting **5** tells us you really agree with that statement. A choice of **3** indicates your relative neutrality on the statement. If you haven't yet responded to this survey, please do so now. And thanks in advance!

<https://s.surveypplanet.com/bmktkdd8>