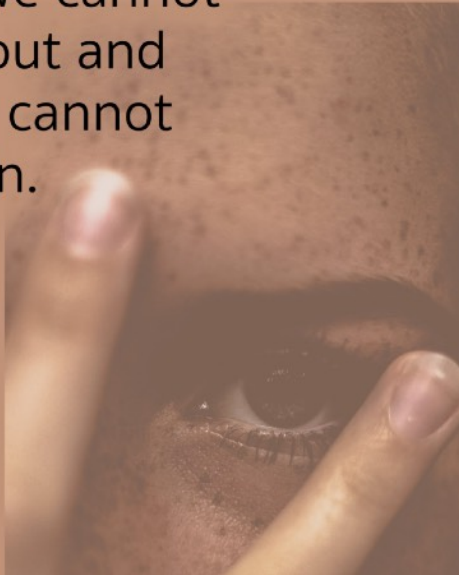




wayfinding

Love takes off
the masks that
we fear we cannot
live without and
know we cannot
live within.

James
Baldwin



Soul Matters

Liberating Love

“Besides people who have loved us, there’s also the things we love! Both liberate us, just in different ways. To create a list of what you love is to remind yourself that life is friend not foe. It is to liberate yourself from the tangled and terrible idea that life is a game to be won or a set of threats to avoid. By stacking up all the things we find precious, we are reminded that this life of ours is also precious and generous at its core.

So give yourself that liberating gift this month by creating a giant list of all the things you love about life!” (from the Soul Matters study packet)

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

Social Justice Giving for January: Through the Trees



**THROUGH
THE TREES** —

The Mission of Through the Trees is to connect the rural community of Transylvania County through technology. They do this by selling up-cycled technology at affordable prices through their UpCycle Tech store at the corner of Osborne Rd and Asheville Hwy, and by getting folks connected to the internet through satellite connections that became “real” in Transylvania County in 2023.

These satellite based connections aren’t cheap to set up. Donations help to cover the cost of the satellite hookup (over \$500). Families handle the \$110 monthly fees, but need help with the hookup cost. Those being served are in places that must be reached by Hughes.net, which has insufficient bandwidth, or don’t have a strong enough cell signal to be able to use mobile-based internet service. This is the first year UUTC has supported Through the Trees. Thanks for your generosity!



The Unitarian President of the United States We Don't Talk About

Rev. Bob Renjilian

Once upon a time there was a young boy growing up in a log cabin who studied whatever book he could find in between chores to split logs and help his family make a subsistence living in the 1800's frontier. Even though he didn't have the advantage of going to school as a child, he went on to study law, run for state and national office, and finally became president of the

United States during a time of strife between southern and northern states, and an upheaval of politics.

He wore a stovepipe hat, was respected for his honest word, and was taller than most men of his time. He and his wife were regular members of the Unitarian church. We don't talk about him. But his birthday is coming up, and so I will tiptoe into addressing his legacy, something we're still trying to undo even now in the 21st century.

No, it isn't Abraham Lincoln, although that President did read wise words of a Unitarian preacher he was not Unitarian. He came later. I'm talking about Millard Fillmore, best known for the Missouri Compromise and his support of strengthening the Fugitive Slave laws of the time. If you've ever watched the Oscar-winning movie "12 Years a Slave" (2013, starring Chiwetel Ejiofor as Solomon Northup, a freeman from New York captured and brought south), you have one narrative of what happened as our US laws took rights from black residents "returning" them to people who claimed ownership.

Fillmore, from Western New York, didn't even like slavery and had answered pre-election questionnaires (when running for office) from Abolitionist groups that he could say "yes" to every one of their goals. Some say in the end he was willing to sacrifice his own reputation just to make compromises to avoid civil war, and to help the US to economic prominence. War came anyway, but in the meantime the US got even deeper into institutionalized racism. He is quoted online saying two things: "God knows that I detest slavery, but it is an existing evil, for which we are not responsible, and we must endure it, till we can get rid of it without destroying the last hope of free government in the world." And also "England at present wields the destinies of the commercial world, and her power is concentrated in London; but if this country can maintain its union, there are those now within the hearing of my voice who will live to see New York what London is now."

When starting out in politics, Fillmore tended towards helping the working class, and proposed reforms that made life better for citizens. Early efforts in state politics included eliminating debtor's prisons (he was successful). He also tried to eliminate the requirement that oaths be taken declaring belief in God and the Afterlife. As biographer Robert Rayback described Fillmore's quotes on the subject: "It was an 'absurd' law," he had charged, and "the narrow feeling of prejudice and bigotry" behind it must give "way to more enlightened and liberal views." What if he'd continued in that path?

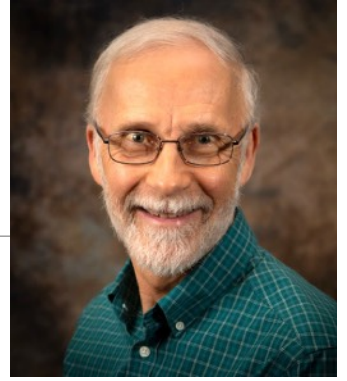
When we talk about accepting the 8th Principle as a Unitarian Universalist congregation, let's remember Fillmore. Not as an exemplar of our faith, but as a warning that we do better:

"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."

President's Corner

Ian Cowie

Rabbits, Dragons & Silver



In the Chinese zodiac Rabbits (2023 zodiac) are known for being gentle, kind, compassionate, lucky and resourceful. They are known for their ability to navigate challenges and emerge unscathed. Dragons, on the other hand, symbolize such character traits as dominance and ambition. They are driven, unafraid of challenges, and willing to take risks.

Silver is a precious metal known for its strength, beauty and resilience. Symbolically its shine and durability can represent unwavering commitment. To maintain its luster, constant polishing and care are required.

This year, UUTC celebrates its 25th Silver anniversary. Our story is about a kind and gentle people being resourceful to build a church unafraid of accepting new challenges and willing to take managed risks. A story that we all feel will continue for years to come depending on the care we and others provide.

Our church's early beginnings were on the campus of Brevard College. A small group of people met weekly. They saw the need for a liberal religious presence in Transylvania County. That was in 1999 - the year of the Earth Rabbit. Soon this growing congregation found a permanent home. With much donated talent and time, the old gas building on Broad Street became a church. Our work expanded into the wider community to support others in their struggles. Today UUTC members and friends find themselves supporting individual spiritual journeys while promoting social, economic and environmental justice.

As we begin discussion on where we want to go in the next two decades, we capture cherished memories. We need to keep the incredible gifts others have provided on the forefront. Because of their work and treasures, we find ourselves today a strong UU congregation fulfilling many needs with our neighbors. How can we maintain this vitality for the generations to come?

In our journey to fulfill our Vision, what do we want our presence to be? How can we better serve others? How can our campus at Varsity and Broad be more welcoming? What changes need to take place for UUTC to be a more integrated part of our community?

Recognizing what we have done and excited about what we plan to do, this Year of the Dragon is knowing how we face new challenges, and what risks we want to take.

I look forward to your participation in this process — It is an exciting time to be part of UUTC.

[Ed: For more on the 2024 Year of the Wood Dragon, enjoy this article from the [South China Press](#).]

New & Existing Programming, Including Changes

Interest Groups — All Meet in the Main Building

The Genealogy Group continues to meet on **Thursdays at 12:30pm**. Erin Lausch, who leads the group, just discovered that she and Rev. Bob are distantly related! What could you learn about yourself?

The Book Group, which meets **monthly on the first Sunday of the month at 3:30pm** has released it's new list of books for the year. Books for February & March are The Forest Lover by Susan Vreeland and Tom Lake by Ann Patchett. All are welcome—but be sure you've read the book before you arrive! Contact Krista Moore for more information.

Brand new to our interest groups is **The Purist Collective**, led by Katie Gwinn. Explore how growing your own food can improve your health and wellness, and how to advocate for improved water and soil quality. **Meets monthly on the second Tuesday (Jan. 9) at 1:30pm. Call** Katie to learn more at (540) 679-6076 Monday through Saturday, between the hours of 9am and 5pm.



Spiritual Exploration and Practice

Spiritual Explorers is back on **January 11th, at 2pm in the Sanctuary, meeting weekly**. Their new book for study (*Sacred Earth, Sacred Soul*, by John Philip Newell) discusses the ancient Celtic spiritual path and its relevance to our time and this moment in history. Get the book and join them! Spiritual Explorers is one of the longest-running programs at UUTC, led by Rev. Earle Rabb, Rev. Jean Rowe, Prof. Carol Flake and others.

Quiet Meditation — Meets on **Tuesdays at 5pm in the Chalice House**. This group is led by Joanna Bliss and Judith Moore. Arrive a little early so you can reconnect with others before the quiet starts.

A Course in Miracles — **Thursdays at 4pm in the Chalice House**, this class is led by Don O'Dell. The Course is a practical approach to change one's perception in order to move from physical "sight" to true "vision" as seen by the Christ already in each of us.

Dream Group — **Meets 2nd and 4th Mondays at 1:30pm in the Chalice House**. This group is led by Carol Flake. You need experience in dream work before joining. Contact Carol if you are interested.

Meditation & Discussion — **Meets Mondays at 5pm in the Foyer**. Led by Lani Callison. The last book was by Pema Chödrön, the new book is likely by Eckhart Tolle.

Grow Getters — **Meets Tuesdays at 10am in the cooler months, 9am in the warmer months**. This group, led by Vicki Held, works to preserve and enhance the native habitat of our campus for the life and well-being of its creatures and the spiritual enrichment of all who dally on the campus. Come be part of the solution!

Earth-Centered Spirituality — **Meets fourth Wednesdays, at 1:30pm**. Led by Heather Williams & Gail Meyers. This is a new group, likely to have additional meeting times. They anticipate additional celebrations besides winter solstice.

WAC*ky (Women's Art Circle) — Specified Fridays, monthly, **by registration only**. The fastest way to get registered for the class is through the Realm Connect app. Enable notifications on your mobile device for the Realm app to receive a notice when the class registration goes live. The next class will be **Friday, February 2nd, from 1-4pm, in the social hall**. Limited to 8 women per class. Led by Jeanie Bernard.

UUTC Choir — Rehearses three Wednesdays a month, at 4pm, in the sanctuary. Directed by John Austin; accompanied by Carlene Ragan. Practice the spiritual discipline of singing in a group for a greater purpose. Contact RK Young or John Austin for details.

Connection & Community



Souper Sunday: January 28th—Now on Fourth Sundays

Enjoy this kid-friendly, congregational shared meal. Takes place immediately after the service—all are welcome, whether you are a member or a visitor! **If you can bring soup** or some other simple item to share for that day, **please sign up at the front counter**—and thanks!

Women's Group: 1st and 3rd Wednesdays at 1:30pm, in the sanctuary.

Men's Group (Zoom): Tuesdays at 9:00am. To get the invite and learn more about this discussion group, contact Jim Hardy or Mark Allison.

Men's Meeting (In Person!): Thursdays at 9am, in the social hall. Led by Hilly Bernard and Rev. Bob.

Grief Support Group: 2nd & 4th Mondays at 11:30am in the Chalice House. Speak with Rev. Bob about joining this group — or he may reach out to you, if you have recently experienced a great loss.

Wonderful Wednesdays: Second Wednesdays. Dinner at 5:30 (please sign up Sunday!), program at 6:30. A trademark UUTC program! This month, Sheriff Chuck Owenby is our presenter, in what looks to be an excellent program. Enjoy an excellent meal followed by a stimulating program. Car pool if you can!



Exploring Membership

Our next class is in February! A sign up sheet will appear next week, with a couple of date options in early February. This class is for those who want to learn more about UUTC, and, perhaps, more importantly, want to get to know some folks before committing to affiliation with our fine group of people. The class not only introduces you to our internal lingo and structure, but also gives you opportunities to explore your own spiritual history and hear from others about theirs.

Leaders: Susan Slocum and Rev. Bob Renjilian.



Getting the Sausage Made Right

RK Young

Please add to your calendar: on **February 15th, at 5:30pm**, there will be a **Congregational Forum** to discuss Bylaw changes. There are several Bylaw changes, and the language needs your careful perusal. So please join us that evening so you will be prepared to **vote** on those changes on **Sunday, February 18th**, after the service. (This keeps the meeting short!) We need a quorum of Members to do any business in the meeting.

Two Task Force groups have been meeting at the Board's direction — one on safety, and one on our Campus. This Campus definition includes our online "reach"... everything from the Men's Group Zoom on Tuesdays to social media to Sundays. The safety task force is closing in on the end of their work, and the Campus group has given a formal report to the Board.

The next step in that process is congregational feedback. An "assets & challenges" survey has been prepared which will ask for your opinions on topics ranging from the online offerings to the structural accommodations for programming to our outdoor spaces. It will ask you what works well, what you think could be better with modification, and what you think is wholly inadequate. After looking at pages four and five of this newsletter, you may have an understanding of why this is coming up.

An initial survey was done in 2016, when our first interim minister was here. That survey resulted in a number of accessibility repair/modifications, and a number of other rehabilitations to the building, such as building a space for our library. The most recent of our accessibility modifications was this past year, when we added the hearing loop—which has been a real difference-maker for those with tele coil-enabled hearing aids. Anyone who owns a home or a car knows that things wear out— so maintenance is an ongoing issue, and sometimes you can just repair things...and sometimes you have to be a little more daring in your modifications, like when the Men's Group added a second dishwasher to our little kitchen!

A pressure point we have is the Neighborhood Use Rule (an IRS rule), which came into play when we purchased the properties to the east of our lower parking lot. We have 15 years from the time of purchase (January 2017) to eliminate the houses there and convert the property to our exempt purposes use. That means we will lose the Chalice House, which provides office and meeting space for us now.

So at this point, we have to figure out what is most important to us — what are our greatest needs? What needs are being met just fine? Each statement of the survey is a sliding scale from 1 to 5. Selecting **1** tells us you really, really disagree with that statement. Selecting **5** tells us you really, really agree with that statement. A choice of **3** indicates your relative neutrality on the statement. So help us do this right, and click through the link below to help us prioritize the needs. And thanks in advance!

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