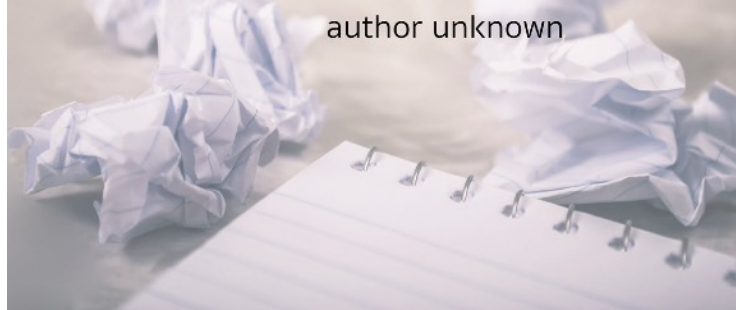




wayfinding

Living involves
tearing up
one rough draft
after another.

author unknown



Soul Matters

The Gift of Transformation

“Let mystery have its place in you; do not be always turning up your whole soil with the plowshare of self-examination, but leave a little fallow corner in your heart ready for any seed the winds may bring, and reserve a nook of shadow for the passing bird; keep a place in your heart for the unexpected guests, an altar for an unknown God.” -Henri-Frederic Ariele

This month’s Soul Matters packet is full of rich explorations for your study & reflection. Give yourself the gift of study!

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

Social Justice Giving for March: **SAFE**

Mission: **SUPPORT, PREVENTION AND OUTREACH**

SAFE will lead our community in eliminating domestic and sexual violence through prevention, advocacy, protection, education, and healing. The SAFE team knows that ending domestic and sexual violence builds stronger families and safer communities.



Click the logo arrow below to be taken to their website for **much** more information.

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

Minister's Report – Rev. Bob met with the Social Action Team in February and included social justice themes in sermons, especially the Feb. 4th message comparing equality, equity, and justice. He advocated for adoption of the 8th Principle at UUTC, speaking to the Board, at the Bylaws Forum, and at the Special Congregational Meeting.

Treasurer's Report – Gail Meyers, chair of the Finance Committee, reported on UUTC's financial status. Revenues received to date are approximately 74% of the annual budgeted revenue; expenses incurred to date are approximately 57% of the expected budgeted expense.

Operations Report — RK reported that the Facilities Team is faced with building and grounds maintenance issues that cannot be covered under their FY23-24 budget. They wish to address the overdue maintenance of our two parking lots, which would cost \$4173.41 — expensive, but not a capital expense. The sanctuary doors also need replacement, but that cost would be a capital expense.

Old Business: Safety Task Force Report to Board – The Task Force recommended revisions of 2 policies, and two statements within the Facilities Team Operating Guidelines. They further proposed new structural and passive safety interventions for consideration by Facilities and the Board. *(More later in this WayFinding.)*

Old Business: Special Congregational Meeting Update – Kay Webb reported that 56 verified Members attended the Feb. 18th meeting and approved the proposed revisions to the Bylaws. Seven Absentee Ballots were received at the time of the meeting.

New Business: Preliminary Budget Status— Gail, Chair of the Finance Committee, reported on the work of the committee in preparing a preliminary budget to present to the Board in March. She indicated that we need to seek additional potential revenue, particularly after receiving word of the increase in the mortgage interest rate by our current bank.

New Business: Date for Annual Meeting— After consulting the church calendar, the date for the Annual Congregational Meeting was scheduled for May 19, 2024, after the Sunday service.

Additional Business — The Board went into executive session to discuss compensation issues.

The next meeting of the Board is March 28, 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 Transformation

Rev. Bob Renjilian

I'm thinking about what was going on in Brevard 25 years ago, when folks were meeting in living rooms and backyard picnics to organize this Unitarian Universalist congregation, and how much transformation has taken place since then. I look at our building and historical photos and see the transformation of the interior and surrounding grounds. I also see The Haven on my walks, and wonder if it would have been built without UUTC, or if the old Free Clinic ever would have been started in Brevard. How many of you came to settle in Brevard because there was a

UU congregation here, and went on to fill the volunteer roles at Sharing House, Bread of Life, the Philharmonic, or serving in other organizations? We also have our authors, protesters and so many others toiling away to shine a light on what needs changing. This congregation has been the site of book studies, important speakers, and host to myriad cultural-broadening viewpoints. This is exemplified most recently in June 2023 when we had the Gay Men's Chorus in Brevard, and in November 2023 we held the first Interfaith Service of Thanks. Our members form partnerships with groups trying to transform society, such as NAACP. What we do has ripple effects - for instance The Thanksgiving service has inspired Good Shepherd Lutheran church to see about having a joint Earth Day event for 2024 (date still to be determined), based on the positive vibe of the Thanksgiving we hosted. If UUTC were not here, it is likely a loss would be felt throughout the wider community. We've changed this place. The folks who started this congregation didn't just get us rolling, they set the stage for so much more - and invited those of us who followed later to keep at it.

We as a religious group tend towards wanting to transform society and ourselves. Maybe that's built into a long world-wide history of being seen as heretics (from the Greek root "to question"), and the personal stories of members who are willing to seek their own religious path rather than stay unchanged in their childhood understandings. We're here because we were otherwise uncomfortable or dissatisfied with things as they were.

A quote from this month's Soul Matters packet from Clarissa Pinkola Estes (a first-generation American poet, psychoanalyst and post-trauma specialist and journalist covering stories of human suffering and hope) is fitting:

Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach. Any small, calm thing that one soul can do to help another soul, to assist some portion of this poor suffering world, will help immensely. It is not given to us to know which acts or by whom, will cause the critical mass to tip toward an enduring good. What is needed for dramatic change is an accumulation of acts, adding, adding to, adding more, continuing. We know that it does not take everyone on Earth to bring justice and peace, but only a small, determined group who will not give up during the first, second, or hundredth gale...

I'll be preaching about "The Gift of Transformation" in March. The Soul Matters Packet will have take-home exercises to help reinforce the message, and other great quotes to absorb (Contact me if you're not on the Realm list to get these packets each month). See you at UUTC!



President's Corner—Change

Ian Cowie

“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.” — Barack Obama

We expect change. Often it is predictable and welcoming. Venturing outside without a winter coat is a pleasant change in early March. Other times change can be abrupt like leaving that same coat behind in December.

Change inside UUTC happens all the time. Through a few special projects* (*see below*) this last year, new window blinds were installed, the sanctuary received a new coat of paint, the Steinway piano had a much needed overhaul, and new chairs for the choir became a reality.

Because of the generosity of members and friends a pledge campaign last year exceeded its goal providing funds to meet our mission and vision. We live our principles by paying our adult staff living wages. UUTC is one of two churches in Transylvania County that are Living Wage Certified. More and more people throughout any given week come through our doors to grow and be inspired because of a discussion, or by reading a book or by understanding a different point of view. Families and children grow because of the programs offered or the safe space for them to meet.

As we close out our fiscal year at the end of June, we juggle our expenses and what income we can expect from our members and friends. Costs continue to rise. It will take more money to keep our doors open to provide the programs and services our community expects. Our building is aging. We need to change our sanctuary doors for better security. We need to replace equipment to meet new changed standards. We need to be part of our wider community to help tackle the needs of other people in our community.

You have your reasons to give to UUTC. It may be to support the basic needs of our congregation, or possibly strengthen our mission, or a way to express your gratitude for what our church community provides. It is important to give.

Ed.: In November of 2022, UUTC began a Sponsored Projects campaign to fund things that needed funding. All but one (outdoor security cameras) received the support it needed to become reality. These projects included repairing the drywall in the sanctuary and repainting, purchasing poly-coated metal picnic tables for our outdoor spaces, installing blinds in the social hall for heat and light remediation, and purchasing new chairs for the choir that included hymnal storage. As the chairs were custom made to the Aesthetic's Team specifications, this took the longest to implement. Donations of all sizes made these projects happen, though one giver in particular, who provided a matching gift, enabled us to have the great success that we did in making these projects happen. Thanks to all!



GIVING CHANGES EVERYTHING!

Nancy Richards

Hopefully you have heard by now that our pledge drive is starting, and that this is the theme: **Giving Changes Everything**. Later in this publication you will read a true story about how a giving event once changed my thoughts and my heart, but it is only one tiny example of the many, many changes that are possible when our hearts, heads, and hands are open.

A wise woman I know, who worked as a fund-raiser at my seminary, once said that she was glad to ask people to give because she knew that giving came with a great opportunity for the giver. She said that in giving, we have a chance to shape and change the future, to create some parts of the world that we want to live in and leave for others.

I believe that is what motivated a small but dedicated group of folks to found this community twenty five years ago. They saw a need for a church that welcomed seekers, for a community that welcomed all kinds of diversity, for a safe place that also challenged its members to ask hard questions and to work for justice in our town, our county, our nation and our world. So much growth and change have happened in those twenty five years, but so much more is still possible as we try to find better ways to love and care for the earth, to educate ourselves, to listen to and support others who may be different from us, to step out courageously into changes that bring us closer to a Beloved Community.

There are many ways to give, and UUTC is a place that needs and welcomes all of the gifts you can offer. Perhaps you can sing in the choir or volunteer to help the Worship or the Facilities team. You might bring your kids or grandchildren to religious exploration classes, Chalice Camp, or the OWL (Our Whole Lives) program. The men's group and women's group both welcome involvement. There are many educational, social and service projects that might inspire you. You might have leadership skills to offer on a team or committee to keep things running and keep us growing. **All** of these things are valued and needed, so please step forward to say yes.

Members and Friends of UUTC have always been generous givers of their financial resources as well. Our mission is not only to support and encourage our own spiritual growth and development, but also to continually widen our circle of inclusion in order to bring more inclusion, understanding and justice into the world. Our vision and our mission can't be realized without the funds to support them, so I am asking you to pledge your support in the most generous way that you can, in order to have your opportunity to build and create the best future we can.

We are on this journey together and we need everyone's help. Your pledge packet should be arriving within the next week or two. Please take a close look at it and respond as soon and as abundantly as you are able. Giving does change everything, and I thank you for joining this effort.

If you have questions or concerns, please call me (828-553-5516) or any member of the Pledge Group and we will try to assist you.

Pledge Group '24..... Nancy Richards, Elena Hearn, Jaci Fricks, Gary Chodoroff, Wendy Hillebrand, Susan Bir, Jane Hilliard, Alexia Blackwell, and Ian Cowie, with the advice and support of RK Young and Rev. Bob.

Thank you!

Giving Changes Everything – A Story

Nancy Richards

Estonia. Fall of 1990. I was a member of a delegation of ordinary folks from New Hampshire who were paired with host families in Estonia for a home stay under the auspices of a group called US-USSR Bridges for Peace. The idea was for real people to meet and listen to each other across the lines of language, politics, and nation.

Our hosts were welcoming and charming. They showed us around and took us to schools, businesses and markets. Estonia was under the thumb of the Soviet Union, and young soldiers were everywhere on the streets, heavily armed. Economic times were hard and people waited in line, sometimes for hours, for a chance to buy food, clothing, and necessities, but often the shelves in the markets were empty.

After we had been in Estonia for a few days, our hosts organized a reception for our whole group and our host families. They prepared some refreshments that included one precious item that someone had managed to procure. It was a small orange, sliced into paper thin pieces. I remember how several of the Estonians gathered around to see this piece of fruit, exclaiming over it because they hadn't seen anything like it in a long, long time. They carried this treasure around the room and urged each guest to take a piece. Although they looked at it with wonder, not one of the hosts took even a sliver. It was very clear that this amazing treat was only for us, the honored guests.

I was young then, but the irony and poignancy of this moment did not escape me. Here I was, a privileged American who could find and afford to buy all the oranges I could ever want at home, being offered a rare delicacy that my hosts could almost never find and had undoubtedly sacrificed to afford. Clearly their great desire was to welcome us, to honor us, to offer the most hospitality they could manage, to extend a message of love. I realized that taking a little slice of that orange and thanking them for it was the deepest way I could thank them.

When our visit ended, we were surprised to find that our flight home on one of the big US airlines, had been unexpectedly cancelled, so we were re-routed onto a flight on Aeroflot, the Soviet airline. We were crowded onto a plane and spread around between many Russian passengers, a number of whom were chain-smoking during much of the flight. On our way home, the plane stopped to refuel in Ireland, and we were allowed to briefly go into the terminal while we were waiting to continue our journey.

At the snack bar inside the airport, there was a pyramid of large, beautiful oranges arranged on the countertop. A few of us noticed that our Russian seat mates were staring at those oranges in amazement. At the last minute before we got back onboard, our group decided to buy up every one of those oranges, and we each took some and gave them to the Russians sitting next to us.

I don't think that anyone peeled or ate one of those lovely fruits. Most of our companions sat holding the oranges gently, as if they were newborn babies, and gazing at them all the way to New York.

Giving changes everything, doesn't it?

Photo by amjd rdwan on Unsplash

99% of Life Is Maintenance...

So I hear! And this is the Function of your Facilities Team—and they are struggling, a bit, to keep up. Let me tell you what they've been up to, lately, as they work to have UUTC ready for it's 25th Anniversary!

Last week, members of this Ministry Team met to clean all the folding tables and most of the folding chairs. On a Saturday. They perform this task bi-annually, so that when you come to enjoy a Wonderful Wednesday, your experience will not be marred by sticky chairs. Only four people were on hand to do this work, this last go around — **the Team could definitely use some new helpers**. But this is just one of the tasks they perform. They also touch up paint. Replace curtains that have stopped curtaining. Clean our windows (!!)... that's a lot of windows. And they work to maintain/repair things that are failing in our building or on our grounds.

One task they have been putting off for some time has been maintenance of our parking lots. You may have noticed that it has become difficult to see the lines that separate parking spaces. One of the post-pandemic problems they have had is securing contractors (and bids) for the work. We like to secure three bids but, lately, have been excited when we can secure a single bid... which is the case for the parking lot. Only one vendor replied to our requests. After much back and forth, the Facilities Team selected a bid of \$4173.41, which has been approved by the Board, to completely refurbish the upper parking lot (pressure washing, cleaning cracks, packing cracks, sealing cracks) and then top coating the entire lot prior to painting new stripes and other markings. The same procedures, save for the top seal coat, will also be applied to the lower parking lot.



Stripe vs. Asphalt Crack

In Transylvania County, cracks can grow at an alarming rate. Our soils can be fluid, which leads to sinkholes and landslides. Maintenance, while expensive, is not as expensive as remediation. The Board opted to move funds designated from one line over to Maintenance to make up the difference in what the Team needs to make this repair happen.

Another bid Facilities pursued was to replace the sanctuary doors, which leak daylight and air all the time, and have now become temperamental about performing the function of closing. They are, admittedly, original to the structure, when they once provided access/egress from the service garage, which is now our sanctuary. Again, the Facilities Team was only able to secure a single bid, despite reaching out to contractors across WNC and even the Greenville area. This bid, over \$6000, makes it a capital expense—and likely a Sponsored Project, since we do not have undesignated funds in the Capital Fund sufficient to cover this cost.

The Team is facing a water heater repair/replacement soon, as well. While Bob Bennett and Howie Friedman will likely be able to patch the problem for a short period, the tank is out of warranty, and costs associated with keeping water hot (\$100 last month) may cause them to recommend a tankless solution going forward.

I have asked the Finance Committee to increase budget allocations for the Facilities Team for next year—this is part of what your pledges pay for. Maintenance!



Grow Getters & Pi Day!

Join us for our **Third Annual Pi Day Pie Auction and Party on Thursday, March 14 from 7-8 PM**. We need pies to auction in all sizes! Smaller pies and tarts are needed, too. Sweet and savory! The sign up sheet is on the counter at church. You can also register via Realm, but we appreciate you taking the time to give others a hint about the pie you are bringing so they can tailor their “make.”

The auction is lively and fun. We’ll have pick-up sweets, goodies, beverages, and wine for you to enjoy while you mingle and

admire the pies. Please plan to attend. You don’t need to donate a pie to get in on the fun. **This year we have a drawing for a gift certificate from New Leaf Garden Market.** All are welcome!

All proceeds benefit the Grow Getters projects. The garden is progressing nicely and we are seeking Certification to become a North Carolina Native Plant Habitat. The entire campus is being certified and removing non-native invasive species continues. Our landscape plan still requires the purchase of additional plants, a stone bench, and signage that welcomes anyone to come into the garden to explore and rest a bit. Your Grow Getters are a group of volunteers that work each week on this project as well as keeping the entire campus maintained. We need more volunteers if you have an hour or two on Tuesday mornings. Email Vicki at vicki.held1@gmail.com with any questions.

What Safety Looks Like

The Safety Task Force, convened by the Board, came up with a number of recommendations. Two addressed statements in the Facilities Team Operating Guidelines, and two addressed statements in UUTC’s Policy Manual. One of these was overly broad in scope and could have been read, for instance, that all electrical and plumbing would need to be updated to CURRENT building codes. The Task Force recommended that a new policy be developed specifically addressing safety infrastructure be considered... something along the lines of *“UUTC will take advantage of technological advances such as secure building access to provide passive and active safety controls,”* which would reflect current practice. This evaluation was a the main factor the Board asked the Task Force to address.

However, the Task Force felt that an evaluation of our building was also in order, to ensure we are providing adequate safeguards to protect all who enter the building. Discussions noted all of the ADA compliance aspects, such as sloped entries, which serve to reduce the likelihood of falls regardless of infirmity. The Task Force invited City and County safety officials to evaluate the building and provide suggestions to further “harden” UUTC against the unlikely, but possible, actions of ill intent.

These recommendations included [break-resistant film](#) for areas where children are present, bollards to prevent accidental or intentional vehicle trespass into the building windows, security cameras connected to a live feed that could be monitored by staff/volunteers, a security “presence,” new doors to the sanctuary that would a) be properly secure and b) be able to be entered via a logged key fob (as we have for the front doors), and finally, the establishment of safety Team (Sentinels) that would have a limited security role.

These recommendations were shared with the Board and with the Facilities Team. The Facilities Team has asked that funding for the film to protect children from glass breakage (approx. \$3000) be added to their 24-25 budget.



Bike Rack Bollard

Pledging FAQs

What is a Pledge and what is a Pledge Unit? A pledge is a promise to contribute a specific amount of money to UUTC during our fiscal year, which runs from July 1st to June 30th. Collectively, pledges made by the members of the UUTC community constitute almost 80% of the income received by the church and are essential to funding staff salaries, facilities, religious education, etc. An individual or family unit who makes a pledge is referred to as a pledge unit.

Why and when are Pledges solicited? UUTC operates under annual budgets, which are prepared by congregational leadership and presented and approved by the membership at the annual meeting in May. To support building the budget, a pledge drive is held in February - March to canvass the UUTC church community to make their pledges for the upcoming church year. The results of the pledge drive enable church leadership to project income for the upcoming church year and to set the budget accordingly.

Are church members expected to make pledges? Membership in UUTC does come with an expectation to provide financial support. Friends are also expected to make a contribution of record (identifiable). If financial constraints preclude making a pledge, please speak with the minister.

Do I need to be formally affiliated with UUTC to make a pledge? No— anyone who wants to support the church financially can make a pledge. If you did not receive a pledge packet, reach out to RK Young, at administrator@uutc.org.

Can I set up automatic pledge payments? Yes. Please use the pledge form: just supply the requested information and your pledge will be added to UUTC's record keeping software system with complete confidentiality. This establishes your promise. You will then be prompted by email to follow up with your payment details. Monthly pledges are especially welcome as they provide the steady operating revenue UUTC needs.

How do I make a gift of stock? It's a simple process and your broker should be able to help you. Begin by obtaining stock transfer instructions by emailing the Administrator at administrator@uutc.org.

Can I make changes to my pledge? Yes. Contact RK Young at administrator@uutc.org or call the UUTC office and leave a message at UUTC's main phone number - (828) 435-2781.

Does all the money I give to the church count against my pledge commitment? No; only pledge payments count against a pledge commitment. Other money given for charitable partner contributions, church events, donations to the Dignity Project, Endowment or Sponsored Projects, etc. are not applied. Include a note with your cash payments (you can put cash in an envelope with your name on it) or use your check's memo line to mark any payments you desire to apply to your pledge.

What happens to unpaid pledge commitments at the end of the church year? Each church year ends on 30 June. In early to mid-June, the church sends out a pledge status to each pledge unit, conducts follow ups with people who have not fully paid their pledge, and adjusts pledges per the feedback received. If someone states that some/all of the amount owed will not be paid, their pledge is adjusted accordingly and if no feedback is received, future payments are applied to the unpaid pledge commitment until it is fully paid off.

Who do I contact if I have questions regarding my pledge? You may contact UUTC's Treasurer, Mike Griffith. Contact the minister if you need to make special arrangements due to hardship or unforeseen circumstances. Contact the Administrator at Administrator@uutc.org if you would like assistance with Realm (our on-line church software). Once in Realm, you may securely check balances, change your payment information, download tax receipts, and much more.



Cherishing Each Other

RK Young

This week, my spouse Kay had a birthday. Because it was a significant one, I rented the social hall at UUTC to facilitate a party which was simply not going to fit in our house. It was a successful surprise; lots of folks made it; and she had a lovely time. But so did everyone else!

We have lots of groups at UUTC, that serve lots of interests. Sometimes, though, I wonder if we remember that, while there is a particular interest that is our excuse for meeting, it is actually the people we meet with that enrich our lives the most. I've read lots of great books, attended movies, music and theater events—and while those experiences have been rich and valuable, they are not as spiritually rewarding as being among friends who care for you and make it known you are loved. The work we do together under these circumstances is reflective — both inwardly, on content, and between each other. Take not this privilege lightly! Who do you know who simply cannot take advantage of a group? What a loss!

Each group that meets at UUTC has the opportunity to make sure its members feel wanted and feel connected. I'm going to give a shout out here to Libann Elwell, who sends a weekly note to members of the Spiritual Explorers group. This has always been a practice of Spiritual Explorers, but Libann has mastered using Realm to send that weekly message. It helps people remember what the topic will be, what day of the week it is (*the challenge is REAL*), and to know that someone cares enough to send that reminder. (It's also more secure than a mass email.) This role shouldn't always be the group leader — they've done the work of planning activities! — and it's nice to share that role within groups. I am very happy to teach this to anyone who wishes to learn. You could be the one!

The pandemic left lots of folks feeling vulnerable and isolated. Encouraging an old friend to join you in a group you love is a gift without a package or postage. Offering to pick them up to further “reduce the barrier to entry” is an order of magnitude greater. Everyone knows that picking someone up is emotional work. Offering to do it means you really value that person. It's like a love bomb with confetti.

Another group I'm loving right now is the Earth-Centered Spirituality group. They are working hard together to figure out best how to respect and explore together, and what that looks like with all the various histories of these traditions. A terrific new group.

Finally, I would like to suggest that if you haven't gotten involved in a group that meets regularly — let's find you one that fits! We have study groups, support groups, service groups, discussion groups, meditation groups... SURELY we can find something. And if we can't, then maybe let's start a new one! We live in an age that celebrates individuality to such an extent that we can forget how transformational it can be to be part of a group. To be connected to the people in that group. To be cherished by the people in that group. To get called when you miss a week!

It's nice to be missed. And it's nice to be welcomed. Let's do more of it.