



Rev. Mandy Beal
Senior Minister

The topic for our August newsletter is “sources of wisdom.” Each of our staff members has submitted a reflection on their personal sources of wisdom. I think you hear plenty about the sources of wisdom that inspire me, so I’ve chosen to focus on Unitarian Universalism’s sources of wisdom.

Most of us are familiar with the 7 (or 8) Principles. Arguably more important, though, are our Six Sources. The Principles and Sources have been described as the branches and limbs of Our Living Tradition. As branches, our Principles make us known to the world. They bear the fruits of Unitarian Universalism. Those fruits, and the branches which support them, are nurtured and grounded in our Six Sources. These are the roots

that give us strength and depth. Our Six Sources are:

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
- Words and deeds of prophetic people which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;
- Wisdom from the world’s religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
- Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God’s love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
- Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;
- Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

UUism is sometimes called a “cafeteria” approach to theology, meaning people can pick and choose their beliefs. That’s just not true. Unitarian Universalism isn’t so much a cafeteria full of things we can take or leave as it is a plate of complex and contrasting flavors and textures that has been carefully and lovingly prepared for us by a beloved elder. We have to eat at least a little bit of everything, even the stuff we don’t like. And who knows? Taste buds change over time and we might find we have grown to appreciate—or even love—something that we once found distasteful.



Abha Dearing
Co-Director of Music Ministry

It is hard to pinpoint exactly which sources inspire us to connect with our inner selves, to develop our inherent spiritualities, but it is a reflective endeavor we are excited about.

For Abha:

Fiction: reading rich prose which depicts the lives of other people who I might never know or meet gives me an intimate peek into the souls of strangers. I have always loved reading, and realistic modern fiction from around the world serves me the best in this regard. I feel connected to others' lived experiences.

Scriptures: growing up Hindu, I read many kids' versions of mythology stories that focused on doing good deeds to attain self-

actualization. These stories also shared entertaining parables about life lessons. This has stayed in my consciousness.

For Steven:

Watching my kids grow up fills me with a sense of hope and joy. When Rahkesh and Raina take risks, when they make mistakes and when they succeed, it reminds me of the cycle of life that my own parents and grandparents went through. I feel their presence and think about future generations.

For both of us:

Music: learning, listening, and performing all contribute to our shared mode of connecting with a higher power, ourselves, and others in the BUC community and in the wider world.



Steven Dearing
Co-Director of Music Ministry



Nico Van Ostrand
Director of Religious Education

I'm fortunate to have many sources of wisdom in my life that constantly challenge me to deepen my understandings. Writings from racial justice and UU leaders, personal stories of mentors and friends, my own experiences, practices like ritual and tai chi... all of these influence my spiritual path.

Writings and analyses help me make sense of the world so that I might find meaning in its complexity. Others' personal experiences help me contextualize my experiences and reinforce our interconnectedness. And my spiritual practices create space for my own inner knowing.

My body stores knowledge in an entirely different way than the logic centers of my brain do. I've come to trust that knowledge

as an important guide for my spirituality. So whenever I encounter a new idea or framing, I pay attention to how it feels in my body and my understanding of the world. The way my body reacts can tell me a lot—the painful things I need to tenderly spend more time with, the hurtful things that counter all of my values, the bright things that fill me with wonder, the reflective things that bring me peace.

I've come to trust my inner knowing as a lens for all the other sources of wisdom available to me, and as a side effect of this, I've learned that just about everything can be a source of wisdom. Almost everything can be a sacred text, something that can teach me about spirituality. I find so much beauty in that.



Valerie Phillips
Administrator

Before I even knew what spirituality was, and long, long before I ever went seeking it out, it found me as a child. During the day, I would share crumbs of a snack with the ants and watch them drag them off to their homes with help from their friends. I'd listen to the bugs and birds, chase squirrels back up their trees, and I'd watch the clouds changing shape endlessly. I'd dig in the dirt and marvel at the stones, rocks and fossils and contemplate their formation. At night, I would lay on a blanket in the grass and stare up at the stars in the sky. It was a meditation of sorts, allowing my mind to travel further away from the earth and out into the heavens, becoming lost, but at peace, with the universe.

Since that time, it has been alone in nature where I return to allow my soul to refill. The earth and nature speak with

an energy that only my soul can hear. I am soon travelling to Wisconsin, where I am looking forward to making that physical connection with the land I grew up on, and let it speak to my soul again. I am sharing with my children places that are deeply meaningful to me, and I hope they will find a similar connection for themselves as well.



Andrew Schreck
Rental Coordinator

Sources of wisdom and spirituality can come from many different places. Sometimes they are an intentional practice like journaling, prayer, or meditation. And other times, sources of wisdom and spirituality appear when we least expect it, and we might miss the clues if we don't stop to recognize their meaning. I think many of us have those indirect or unexpected sources if we stop to think about them, see their influence, and seek them out. Stopping to think and acknowledge is a spiritual practice in and of itself.

Community is one important source of wisdom and spirituality. For me, it was growing up in the BUC RE program, and being part of the band and orchestra community in high school. I outgrew my band and orchestra community, but grew into other communities that provide new sources of wisdom, like professional organizations and parenting groups. Thankfully, BUC has remained one of my primary sources as I have grown and evolved over time. Our weekly worship services provide a quiet, contemplative time to think. During Covid shutdowns and virtual Zoom church, I looked forward to Sunday mornings for that moment of reflection, insight, or reassurance that I needed to get me through the day or week.

My family is another important source of wisdom and growth. The conversations and connections we have and how we learn from each other in many different ways provide a multitude of ideas and moments to pause and reflect. There's nothing like a lively dinner table conversation with teenagers to spark a new perspective, a sense of hope, or just a laugh. I look for these moments during a conversation about a college essay, a car ride to a baseball tournament, or a discussion while walking the dog.



Sara Constantakis
Communications Coordinator

The search for wisdom is one of the most important and meaningful pursuits of our lives. We all need touchstones and guides to navigate the human experience and help us find connection, purpose, and meaning. For someone like me, with tendencies toward anxiety and perfectionism, the search for wisdom becomes even more significant, because I don't want to get it "wrong." Which voices do I listen to?

I experience much of the world through words, language, and ideas, so the sources of wisdom I turn to most often are writers, thinkers, teachers, activists, and those who make art with words and ideas. Lately I have felt guided by the words of queer writers and activists of color like adrienne marie brown, Sonya Renee Taylor, Staceyann

Chin, and Roxane Gay; the pair of visual artists known as Flying Edna are a constant source of inspiration and wisdom; and I rely on the insight and truth in the work of Brené Brown and Glennon Doyle. When words aren't enough—or when they're too much—I find wisdom and comfort in the natural world and the life humming around me.

I've been told that, since I was a child, I've liked certainty, knowing the answers, and having things spelled out. So as an adult, that's become the biggest challenge on my spirituality journey, especially recently: accepting and living with uncertainty. But wisdom doesn't promise certainty, and I continue to learn that from the sources mentioned above. The answers aren't always easy, but the search is everything.



Donna Larkin Mohr
President, Board of Trustees

Feeding Myself

How do I feed my soul? From where or whom do I draw my inspiration? Our faith reminds us that we draw from many sources:

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, which we may find in meditation, prayer, interpersonal relationships, walking in nature.
- Words and deeds of prophetic people.
- Wisdom from the world's religions—Jewish, Christian, and Humanist teachings. I have a particular affinity for Buddhist teachings.

Like others, I am sometimes hovering on the cusp between nothing and something—awaiting the creative force to turn the empty page into words that illuminate. Drawing a blank, I walk to the kitchen, open the refrigerator, feel the cool air calming my being. I marvel at all the colors, the label on the brick of butter, the bubbles in the Pellegrino water.

I am good at feeding my mouth, but feeding my soul gets complicated. I readily select five ingredients from my refrigerator and pantry, and turn it into something scrumptious.

What am I here for? Death is certain, but the time of death uncertain. What should I do now? Rilke talks about loving the questions and recognizing that one day, if I live long enough, I may learn to live into the answers. Those words feed me.

On my spiritual path, to feed my soul, I need people and space that enable me to find my goal of a fulfilled life and a way to unify with the ultimate reality.



Joanne Copeland
Bookkeeper

We are asked “Where do you draw from for your own spiritual path?” Good question. My answer has been the same for most of my life. Nature is my way of finding spirituality. The Great Lakes have been a big part of my life from day one. We had a cottage in Canada on Lake Erie for many, many years. There were only a few trees on the property, so there was open sky and no lights. There is nothing better than sitting out on the fifty-foot cliff, overlooking the lake, listening to the waves, the birds, the fishing boats, and the wind in the trees. Or, sitting out there waiting for the full moon to rise and when it did, it was this huge orange orb, dripping out of the lake. The moonlight shimmering on the lake’s waves was truly mesmerizing. And, I must not forget the stars. When the

moon wasn’t shining, the stars were stunning! So, so many of them, and twice I was able to experience the Northern Lights.

That’s where I find my spiritual path... through Nature.

Don’t Forget Primaries and “Off-Year” Elections

Local elections can have a big impact on our lives, and on August 3 you may have the chance to make your voice heard. On this summer’s ballot are various proposals and elections for school board representatives, city council members, and mayors all across the area. Find out if you have an election in your city or township on August 3—and if so, what’s on the ballot—at:

<https://mvic.sos.state.mi.us/PublicBallot/Index>

Some governmental units will also have elections on November 2, 2021. Most local elections are nonpartisan, so it may take some additional research to learn about local candidates. Go to www.Vote411.org, run by the League of Women Voters, for ballot and candidate information.

Register to vote, update your voter information, or apply to vote absentee by visiting <https://mvic.sos.state.mi.us>

—A reminder from BUC’s Civic Engagement team

Vespers Service

Monday, August 9 | 6:00 pm (DAY CHANGE)



Our monthly Vespers services are moving to the second Monday of the month at 6:00 pm. Join Rev. Mandy on Monday, August 9 on Facebook Live for this joyful, yet introspective evening service that centers gratitude for the day that has passed and welcomes the night that is beginning. The service will include the lighting of memorial candles, candles of concern, and candles of hope and joy. Names for candle lighting can be submitted via [this link](#) (also on our [website](#) under Worship Links),

or shared in the comments on Facebook Live.

To view the service live, visit the [Birmingham Unitarian Church Facebook page](#) at 6:00 pm on Monday, August 9. The video will stay on our Facebook page for later viewing.

“5 Questions” on Facebook Live

Monday, August 23 | 6:00 pm

Join us every fourth Monday of the month at 6:00 pm for our Facebook Live feature, “5 Questions.” Each month, Rev. Mandy will be inviting a different BUCer or group of BUC leaders for a conversation that will be streamed live on BUC’s Facebook page. Rev. Mandy will ask the same four questions each time, and then her guest(s) will have the chance to ask her one question, about anything.

To watch live, visit the [Birmingham Unitarian Church Facebook page](#) at 6:00 pm on Monday, August 23. The video will stay on our Facebook page for later viewing.



Rev. Mandy and July guest
Eric Sargent, Chair of the
Budget & Finance Committee

Plate Collection

Our plate collection recipient through August 15 is [Voters Not Politicians](#), a non-partisan, nonprofit organization founded as a ballot initiative to end gerrymandering in Michigan. VNP has expanded to become a voter-led, pro-democracy political reform movement with thousands of volunteers who are engaged, empowered, and committed to strengthening our democracy. As part of the Civic Engagement arm of the BUC Social and Environmental Justice program, we are working to assist VNP in fighting legislation and other efforts to suppress voter involvement. For more information, contact Civic Engagement group leader Harper West at harper_west@yahoo.com.

From August 15 through September 26, our plate collection recipient is **Communities United for Children (CUFC) in support of BUC's partnership with Walt Whitman Elementary School in Pontiac**. Recognizing the impact of educational inequities based on economics and race, BUCers support this K-5 elementary school with school supplies and services including a mobile library, tutoring, and after-school Bananagrams. CUFC is a nonprofit created by BUC to support this program. Contact Mary Jo Ebert at maryjoebert@gmail.com for more information, including volunteer opportunities.

A plate donation can be made at any time via the [BUC website](#), to Venmo username @BUCMI, or by mailing a check to the church office with “plate collection” on the memo line.

Rummage Update

After conferring with the BUC Reopening Task Force, the Rummage Committee has been reviewing our plans for a fall sale. We are considering the logistics of conducting a sale while requiring masks for volunteers and shoppers. For a full sale to proceed, we will need to ensure that we have sufficient volunteers during all three sale days. A lack of volunteers would make a full rummage sale impossible. In order to hold the sale, we must also identify a nonprofit to pick up excess rummage at the end of the sale. As an alternative to the fall sale, we are considering other options such as a silent auction only, or postponing the sale until spring.

—BUC Rummage Committee

Racial Justice News

From July 2020 through April 2021, we conducted regular **Confronting Racism** sessions focused on subjects such as the Black Lives Matter movement, the history of white supremacy, and racial disparities in health care and the criminal legal system. Each one gave direction on “something you can do right now” to address racism, along with action alerts communicated through other church channels.

The work to confront racism in ourselves and our institutions continues. We invite you to share topics, actions, etc. of interest to you.

There are 39 voting bills moving through the Michigan legislature, many of which will **restrict voters’ access** under the guise of election integrity. If passed, these changes will disproportionately affect communities of color, older adults, and disabled people. Contact Harper West, who leads Civic Engagement for the Social and Environmental Justice program, for ways to oppose these discriminatory bills. MUUSJN (MI UU Social Justice Network) is sending alerts as the bills come up in the legislature. Join their contact list at uujustice.org.

Exploration of a proposed **8th Principle** is percolating at BUC and across the country. It affirms and promotes “*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.*” Endorsed by Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism (BLUU) and Diverse Revolutionary UU Ministries (DRUUMM), this principle has been adopted by a number of UU congregations. BUC’s GUUSH youth group has also voted to adopt it! Watch for opportunities at BUC to learn about this proposed principle and to discuss the commitment it entails.

Are you passionate about your own anti-racism journey or BUC working on being an anti-racist congregation? If so, please get in touch with any Racial Justice team member: Mary Jo Ebert (chair), Pat Butkiewicz, Lillian Dean, Izzy Khapoya, Latika Mangrulkar, Mary Masson, Helen Oliver-Brooks, Marti Szilagyi. There are various ways for you to be involved in this work, adaptable to your schedule and interests.

Calendar of Events

The events listed here can always be found on our [website](#) under [calendar](#). Events are also announced in the weekly email, Sunday service announcements, and our [BUC Community private Facebook group](#).

The [calendar](#) also lists information for committee and group meetings.

To join a virtual event or meeting, simply click on the Zoom link. If you're not using a computer to access Zoom, you can dial into meetings with your phone by calling the number and entering the meeting ID and passcode.

Weekly Events

Worship Services

Sundays | 10:30 am

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/196899450?
pwd=RXJuNFpHdWMraENaZmFDWFVaSExqUT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/196899450?pwd=RXJuNFpHdWMraENaZmFDWFVaSExqUT09)

dial-in: 253-215-8782
meeting ID: 196 899 450
passcode: 882131

Sunday Discussion Group

Sundays | 3:00 pm

[https://zoom.us/j/96501517735?
pwd=Yy9NSUg3TGRHUGxjNDY5VzRtT0dzZz09](https://zoom.us/j/96501517735?pwd=Yy9NSUg3TGRHUGxjNDY5VzRtT0dzZz09)

dial-in: 253-215-8782
meeting ID: 965 0151 7735
passcode: 047076

Living by Heart

1st Mondays of the month | 7:00 pm

[https://zoom.us/j/99983328991?
pwd=N1cybVdKYXhWSE9PVEZDS
Vo3Y1VxQT09](https://zoom.us/j/99983328991?pwd=N1cybVdKYXhWSE9PVEZDSVo3Y1VxQT09)

dial-in: 253-215-8782
meeting ID: 999 8332 8991
passcode: 569485

Remaining Mondays of the month | 1:30 pm

[https://zoom.us/j/92103015538?
pwd=YzVMZzZpQTthhb0lFUVhYYlk5Vy8
vZz09](https://zoom.us/j/92103015538?pwd=YzVMZzZpQTthhb0lFUVhYYlk5Vy8vZz09)

dial-in: 253-215-8782
meeting ID: 921 0301 5538
passcode: 016260

August Events

George Meyer memorial service

Saturday, August 7 | 11:00 am

[https://zoom.us/j/95218099860?
pwd=VFkrV2FhOFZYWFNsTlhUZmI1R01Gdz09](https://zoom.us/j/95218099860?pwd=VFkrV2FhOFZYWFNsTlhUZmI1R01Gdz09)

dial-in: 253-215-8782
meeting ID: 952 1809 9860
passcode: 788616

Vespers Service

Monday, August 9 | 6:00 pm

Live on the [Birmingham Unitarian Church Facebook page](#)

5 Questions

Monday, August 23 | 6:00 pm

Live on the [Birmingham Unitarian Church Facebook page](#)

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