

# BUC

Birmingham Unitarian Church  
A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

December 5  
Music Sunday



December 12  
“Encouragement to Spiritual Growth”



December 19  
“Sacred Rest”



Tuesday, December 21, 7:00 pm  
Special service - Yule



Friday, December 24  
Christmas Eve services



5:30 pm - Family service  
7:00 pm - Late service  
“Joy to the World”



Thank you for your help making the holidays brighter with gifts for families at Walt Whitman Elementary School! Thanks to your generosity, all of the families have been adopted.

You have two options for **dropping off your gifts at church:**

**Saturday, December 11**

email Jane O'Neil at [BUCSEJ@gmail.com](mailto:BUCSEJ@gmail.com)  
to make a private appointment for a socially distanced drop-off

**Sunday, December 12**

before/after service

## Poinsettia Pickup

Sunday, December 5  
10:00 am - 12:00 pm  
Purple Door room

If you ordered poinsettias for pickup, please come to the Purple Door room on Sunday, December 5 between 10:00 am and 12:00 pm



## Save the Date - Talent & Services Auction

Yes, there will be an Auction next year! Please mark *Saturday, February 12* on your 2022 calendar for this big BUC event!

It will look different than prior years' auctions, but the committee's early ideas are centered on making it feel just as fun. Want to help us plan and pull this off? Contact Barb Eschner, Teresa Honnold, or Amy Smalley—we're all in the church directory! Let's work together on another joy-filled, service-oriented, budget-boosting event!

—BUC Auction Committee

## Sunday Usher Signup

contact: Janet Brown ([janet\\_brown@wayne.edu](mailto:janet_brown@wayne.edu))

Four ushers are needed every Sunday morning from 10:00 am until 11:45 am in the sanctuary.

Click [HERE](#) for more details and to sign up for usher spots for the entire church year, or use the button on our [website](#) under Worship Links.



## Sunday Flower Dedications

contact: Ginger Luckins ([ginluckins@gmail.com](mailto:ginluckins@gmail.com))



Sign up to dedicate flower arrangements for our chancel on Sunday mornings. For a minimum \$50 donation, you can dedicate a flower arrangement in honor/memory of a loved one, or in honor of a cause, milestone, or special occasion. ***BUC handles ordering of the flowers, and they are delivered to the church.***

Click [HERE](#) for the signup form with payment instructions, or use the button on our [website](#) under Worship Links.

## December worship theme in art ...

For our worship theme this month, we are looking at the Third UU Principle through the lens of “Reverence.” Here are this month’s contributions on “Reverence” by members of BUC’s Living by Heart group. If you’d like to join Living by Heart at their weekly virtual meetings, see the events listing near the end of this newsletter.



Photo by Donna Larkin Mohr



Painting by Susan Darlington



Photo from Janette Andrews  
("joy being together")



Photo by Karen Schreck



Painting by Carol E. Jackson

# Staff Reflections

## Third UU Principle



**Rev. Mandy Beal**  
*Senior Minister*

As we continue our exploration of the 7 (or 8) Principles of Unitarian Universalism, we come to the 3rd:

“acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.” This is the principle that addresses, and asks, one of the most common questions about UU churches: “How can you be a church if everyone believes different things?” Let’s assume this is a question about spirituality, rather than the use of the word “church.”

I think the answer is pretty straightforward. We don’t all believe different things. We believe a lot of the same things, but we use different words, religions, and philosophies to get there. For example, we believe that we are all one human family and our origins and destinies are linked.

We believe that our environment is under threat caused by humans and that we have the potential to stop causing that harm. We believe that all people should live in safety and have a fair chance at success in life. Some of us draw those conclusions from a specific religious perspective and some through their own life experience. Many of us even come by those beliefs through both.

Our 3rd Principle calls us to accept each other’s beliefs and support each other’s spiritual growth, acknowledging the pluralism in our congregation. There are BUCers who identify as Humanist, Pagan, Buddhist, Christian, Atheist, Agnostic, and a little bit of all of the above. There are people who draw wisdom and guidance from logic, a variety of schools of philosophy, mysticism, and more. We have a rich tapestry of beliefs and ideas from which to choose. Unitarian Universalism is not the absence of beliefs, it is the presence of all beliefs. Well.. most beliefs. It is our agreement, through the 3rd Principle, to support each other’s beliefs while sharing and discussing other perspectives.

Our keyword for diving into this principle is “Reverence.” December is a month of celebrations, both religious and secular. This is an excellent opportunity for us to consider what inspires reverence in us, and what inspires reverence in others. Giving each other the space and respect to consider what we believe and why is a wonderful gift we can all give each other.



**Abha Dearing**  
*Co-Director of Music Ministry*

Even though religion, sex, and politics are often considered taboo topics of conversation, every once in a while someone will ask me what religion I am. I will often say “I was brought up Hindu and am Unitarian Universalist.” But that doesn’t seem to be a full answer. I could go into more detail and say I am a cultural Hindu, an aspiring Buddhist, a practicing UU, and a celebrator of Christmas, Yom Kippur, Easter, and any other holiday that teaches me to be a better human. But then that seems too complex.

And when someone asks me about the UU part, I give a quick shpiel about the 7 (now 8) Principles, enumerating them based on who the asker is. I will always recite Principle 1 (“The inherent worth and dignity of every human”), and then

mention Principle 7 (“Respect for the interdependent web of all existence”—environmental conscience), and gloss over some of the others, mentioning that we act for social justice, pull from various world religions, and that some people come to Unitarian Universalism while remaining true to another faith. It can all be a bit confusing. “Coming together in a like-minded community” seems impossible, given how very different UUs are from one another. But, we do it.

What about you? What experiences and values have shaped your belief systems, and do you bring your whole self to church? Is your personal elevator speech more like a skyscraper speech? Is it important enough or worth it for you to even bother with it?

At BUC, I have made assumptions that because you are attending service, you feel exactly as I do about religion, sex, politics, and whatever else we are not supposed to discuss. The truth, however, is that we are all multi-faceted. And I might not know you the way I think I do. So some more good reasons to go to church: to dispel pre-conceived notions and open my mind, heart, and consciousness.

I look forward to getting to know you better.



**Steven Dearing**  
*Co-Director of Music Ministry*

I lost my mom just over two years ago. I would be lying if I said we had a great relationship, but one thing I can say honestly is that she instilled in me a sense of curiosity and questioning what is true.

Questioning authority sometimes got me into trouble in my youth, and this often made my thinking blurry. What was right and what was wrong were lines that were not always clear to see and understand, especially in a moment when certainty was wanted, but I believe this way of looking at the world has served me well.

One way this has helped me on my spiritual journey is longing to learn from others: how they think, what they believe, etc. I find spending time talking to others about what serves them much more meaningful than reading books on other religious beliefs. Visiting houses of worship

(something our kids had the opportunity to do in their RE classes) on a guided tour has been something that fulfills me spiritually as I feel my body tingling with energies unexplained.

When I tell others about my job and what we do at BUC, I reflect on what attracted me here in the first place. One Sunday, Minister Emeritus Doug Gallager was referring much of his sermon to Buddhist philosophy, a subject I had explored significantly. The very next Sunday, Rabbi Sherwin Wine was discussing Humanitarian Judaism and relating it to Unitarian Universalism. I remember thinking how cool it was to hear about two completely different religions in the same house of worship. I was captivated by both speakers and felt myself reflecting on what I learned for days afterwards.

Diversity of beliefs is part of what we are as UUs. Getting to know what others believe allows us to be more connected to one another. I have often said that if we continue to build a multiracial world, we will no longer be able to hate. Maybe if we take it a step further and say if we all mix cultures and religions, we might find that we all end up being UUs. That could be Nirvana.



**Nico Van Ostrand**  
*Director of Religious Education*

My spiritual journey began in Catholicism, and wound its way through a surface-level exploration of several religions before my family found its way to Unitarian Universalism. I know many Unitarian Universalists have a similar story. Many of us also have a sort of mish-mash of beliefs that we collected over the years, held alongside the 8 Unitarian Universalist Principles. My biggest moments of faith formation happened in my late teens and early 20s, when I began to decide for myself which pieces of my parents' and church's teachings I wanted to hang on to. If I thought I had any kind of clarity about my spiritual path, that was shaken when I entered seminary this fall—which, thanks to the guidance of the 3rd Principle, I find myself framing as a positive thing.

The shaking and twisting of one's spiritual path, and the support of the community as we do so, is vital to Unitarian Universalism. This does not mean it is always easy, nor does it mean we have to accept harmful spiritual practices. It is complicated to learn about the roots of our faith and cast off problematic components, attempting to move forward in a more just way. The grief of recognizing oppression in beloved UU programs or practices is complex. Yet the 3rd Principle calls me to honor that sense of loss, and face the change all the same. I am always navigating this spiritual path, leaning on the other Principles and the community to guide me.



**Valerie Phillips**  
*Administrator*

“Do not interfere with other people’s understanding of God.” -My Mom

She also said “God” is not what you think it is. She would be right, of course, but as with many things, I wouldn’t figure it out until much later. I think of myself mostly as an agnostic atheist. I said my peace with God many years ago. My involvement in our church has expanded my understanding and relaxed what I found acceptable regarding spirituality. I also think there are many commonalities between belief systems. If they were mixed all together, I think the truth among them all would be easy to see. Or maybe it’s this idea that satisfies my mind and soul and helps me build my own understanding of God and the Universe as a whole.

I don’t expect others to think exactly like I do. We’re all different people with different life experiences. It would then stand to reason that one’s spiritual journey is a personal one. When it comes to spiritual beliefs, I think we all want to be heard, believed and understood, and above all, respected. I’ve always tried to accept other people’s beliefs, as long as they’re not harming themselves or others, and especially not pressuring me to believe as they do. I love to hear other people’s experiences of their past, and where they are now in their spiritual journeys. I love when we have connections and we can safely and respectfully share experiences with others regarding their beliefs, ideas, and rituals.



**Joanne Copeland**  
*Bookkeeper*

At a very young age, I remember my Aunt, who was in a wheelchair as a result of polio, served as one of the founders of a group called MAC—Metropolitan Activities Club. They were quite the active group considering many were in wheelchairs and had difficulties walking, speaking, and doing daily activities. My mother always volunteered her children to help with any of MAC's gatherings, parties, bowling events, crafts, and different outings. I remember my first time with the group, when I was a little taken aback by how some of the people looked and talked because of their disabilities. But my mother explained to us before we entered the club that these people are just like you and me. They have feelings and aspirations just like you and me, so treat them

with kindness. She was right. My siblings and I got to know several of them quite well and became quick friends. We did not “see” their disabilities.

This was the start of my spiritual growth. The acceptance of all worked pretty well throughout my youth. Then adulthood came and so many evil events transpired, and the “all” part became less and less. Then I started attending BUC and found others going through the same feelings. I found my spiritual home and family, especially the choir. Ministers have come and gone, but the choir has always been there for me. They have guided me through this ongoing spiritual path through friendship and wonderful music. They are my rock, they are my peeps.



**Andrew Schreck**  
*Rental Coordinator*

Growing up a UU is interesting. You are surrounded by school classmates studying for catechism, going to Vacation Bible School, or celebrating their bar/bat mitzvahs, and their religious identity seems very easy to understand and you struggle to explain yours... “you see, there are these seven principles...”

Going through RE you’re exposed to a variety of concepts and religions. Maybe you pass through the “I don’t know what I believe in but it isn’t ‘God’” phase. You dabble in some secular humanism. Show appreciation for some Wiccan customs that a friend is practicing. Rastafarianism... oh, Pastafariansim. At some point, you likely fall into the trap of “I’m better than those people” and you

move on from that viewpoint, realizing that it directly conflicts with the Third Principle.

You collect those pieces of the experience along the way, shaping who you are and what you believe. You begin to see that we all have a wide variety of experiences that have shaped our spiritual and religious selves, and one of the wonderful and unique things about Unitarian Universalism is that openness to people’s own unique journey. We’re all coming from different places, but on a journey to grow spiritually, supported by a community that encourages that exploration.



**Sara Constantakis**  
*Communications  
Coordinator*

“Any faith worth a damn is a faith worked out over a lifetime of relationships with other people. Church is just a commitment to try to live a life of a certain quality—a life of love, of humility, of service—alongside others for whom you will care and allow to care for you, even when that’s difficult. It’s a group of regular old humans trying to love each other and the world in superhuman ways.”

-Glennon Doyle

My spiritual path led me to Unitarian Universalism in my very early 30s after having attended Catholic schools from K-12 and being an active participant in two Catholic congregations through childhood and adulthood. Catholicism was the only religious perspective offered to me during my formative years, and subsequent years of intellectual and emotional development led me to realize that I didn’t align with it any longer. After four years or so of being “unchurched,” I found Unitarian Universalism at BUC. I remember that much of my New to UU group was made up of what I half-seriously refer to as “recovering Catholics.” That connection was part of what made me feel like I belonged here.

It can be easy and convenient to define our spiritual paths by what we aren’t, or what we don’t believe, as my story illustrates. I know what I’ve rejected about Catholicism, but it hasn’t been until recently that I’ve realized the importance of defining our spirituality by what we are, what we do believe. Our 7(8) UU Principles help us do that, and our 3rd Principle asks that we walk alongside each other while we do, like Glennon Doyle says in the quote above.

Many people set off on a spiritual path looking for answers to life’s big questions. And sometimes we’re attracted to a faith tradition because of the answers it provides. I feel lucky to have found, through Unitarian Universalism and BUC, a faith community and spiritual home where the questions, and the very asking of them, are valued just as much as the answers.

## From the Board



**Donna Larkin Mohr**  
*President, Board of Trustees*

Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations may mean different things to different people. It says to me that I accept your spiritual path may be different than mine, and I want to hear whatever details of your journey you are willing to share.

It is one thing to say having different perspectives is okay, but it is not the same as saying I accept your spiritual path may be different than mine. Acceptance is derived from the belief in the inherent worth and dignity of everyone. Yes, that means I am challenged by our faith. Challenged in a positive way to learn and grow.

According to Kenneth Collier, “Our spirituality is living our deepest reality, our deepest truth, our deepest value, into the world.” The operative words are “into the world.” To grow and develop a community means I accept and you accept; it means we are deeply bound together. The task at hand is not simple, but a life-long challenge to bring love, truth, justice into our world.

Reverence, according to my dictionary, means deep respect for someone or something. I am beginning to grasp why acceptance and reverence are inextricably tied together, and I am grateful for being part of a faith community that constantly challenges me.

## “5 Questions” on Facebook Live

Monday, December 20 | 6:00 pm

Join us on Facebook every fourth Monday of the month at 6:00 pm for “5 Questions,” Rev. Mandy’s monthly live conversations with BUC leaders.

The December session will be happening on the third Monday, December 20, instead of the fourth. To watch live, visit the [Birmingham Unitarian Church Facebook page](#) at 6:00 pm on Monday, December 20. The video will stay on our Facebook page for later viewing.



**Rev. Mandy and August guest  
Brian Schandevell**

## December Plate Sharing



The recipient of our December plate sharing is **Samaritas**, a Detroit-based nonprofit whose services include resettlement of refugees from many parts of the world. Through its Afghan Refugee Network, Samaritas is seeking our help to resettle up to 350 adults and children who were evacuated from Afghanistan and are completing the U.S. screening process. Most of them fled with little more than the clothes on their back and now seek protection and a

chance to become productive members of our Michigan communities. With community support, over 75% of refugees become self-sufficient within 180 days. Let us support their settlement and help make our state a welcoming new home. Learn more at [samaritas.org](https://samaritas.org).



## Thank You for Supporting SOS!

Thank you to all who participated in our support for people being served by South Oakland Shelter. Together with the Beacon, Farmington, and Northwest UU congregations and Muslim Unity Center, we donated **\$11,136** to fund meals for the 85 adults, youth, and children being housed by SOS, in lieu of our annual onsite host week. In addition, a BUC team cooked, packaged, and delivered one of our signature SOS dinners for the guests. Thank you to Karen Stankye for organizing the dinner preparation, the 17 crew members who did various jobs, and all who donated! To learn about other ways to support Lighthouse MI, of which SOS is a part, click [here](#).

# Calendar of Events

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The events listed here can always be found on our website [calendar](#). Events are also listed in weekly emails; on announcement slides on the foyer TV, website, and before worship services; and in our [BUC Community private Facebook group](#). The [calendar](#) also lists information for committee and group meetings. The color of the dot on the calendar tells you if the meeting is virtual-only (blue), in-person only (pink), or multiplatform (yellow; with both virtual and in-person options).

## Weekly Events

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### Worship Services

Sundays | 10:30 am | Multiplatform

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

**NO SERVICE**  
**Sunday,**  
**December 26**

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

### Sunday Discussion Group

Sundays | 3:00 pm | Virtual

[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

The book *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* by Timothy Snyder will be discussed in December.

### Living by Heart | Virtual

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

## December Events

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### Issues and Ale

Friday, December 3 | 6:00 pm | Virtual

[https://zoom.us/j/96772977658?  
pwd=a1pYNDd6cnk5WENzZ01hZ2RRTDNIZz09](https://zoom.us/j/96772977658?pwd=a1pYNDd6cnk5WENzZ01hZ2RRTDNIZz09)

Meeting ID: 967 7297 7658

Passcode: 227512

Dial-in: 253-215-8782

### Humanists of BUC

The Humanists will not be meeting in December

### Poinsettia Pickup

Sunday, December 5

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Purple Door room

### Adopt-a-Family Gift Drop-off @ BUC

Saturday, December 11

1:00 - 3:00 pm

Sunday, December 12

9:30 am - 12:30 pm

### Special Service -Yule

Tuesday, December 21 | 7:00 pm | Multiplatform

[https://zoom.us/j/97423892868?  
pwd=MHhsVjl5bnRLbDZ3MlpPWHRmNjhqZz09](https://zoom.us/j/97423892868?pwd=MHhsVjl5bnRLbDZ3MlpPWHRmNjhqZz09)

Meeting ID: 974 2389 2868

Passcode: 168443

Dial-in: 253-215-8782

### Christmas Eve Services | Friday, December 24 | Multiplatform

Family service | 5:30 pm

[https://zoom.us/j/92195138747?  
pwd=blhneDk4aXNFZWxaenVF  
WU9EOGNmdz09](https://zoom.us/j/92195138747?pwd=blhneDk4aXNFZWxaenVFWU9EOGNmdz09)

Meeting ID: 921 9513 8747

Passcode: 833981

Dial-in: 253-215-8782

Late service | 7:00 pm

[https://zoom.us/j/93584333641?  
pwd=ZzlkVUhh3RHVMbU5YUW  
psREpZdGJFQT09](https://zoom.us/j/93584333641?pwd=ZzlkVUhh3RHVMbU5YUWpsREpZdGJFQT09)

Meeting ID: 935 8433 3641

Passcode: 938209

Dial-in: 253-215-8782

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