

BUC

Birmingham Unitarian Church
A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

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September 5

VIRTUAL



“The History of the Labor Movement in Detroit”

September 12

MULTI-PLATFORM



Homecoming Sunday

September 19

MULTI-PLATFORM



“Now What?”

September 26

MULTI-PLATFORM



“The Shelter of BUC” / Sukkot

COVID-19 Safety Guidelines

The BUC Reopening Task Force, with the support of our congregants, lay leaders, and staff, has developed the following safety guidance as we plan for Homecoming Sunday on September 12 and our return to in-person worship services and religious education. These guidelines will be posted on the [BUC website](#).

Guidelines for in-person activities at BUC

- All attendees to church functions on the BUC campus are required to wear a mask regardless of vaccination status.
- Speakers at the pulpit or soloists performing, socially distanced from the congregation, may take their masks off while speaking or performing. These persons must be fully vaccinated and attest to their lack of recent COVID-19 symptoms or exposure prior to participating in a worship service.
- If you have the possibility of active COVID illness or recent exposure to a person with COVID, do not attend church functions until a safe period has passed (i.e., 14 days after your last contact, per [CDC guidelines](#)).
- No food or drink will be served at indoor BUC functions held at the BUC campus. People may bring water, but masks may only be lifted briefly to drink. Groups that have traditionally served food or drinks at events should consider meeting outdoors, when possible, or at an off-campus location.
- We ask that people adhere to the principle of “active consent” in their interactions with other folks and with respect to their personal space. For example, ask if someone is comfortable with a hug or a handshake, or check before sitting closer than three feet from someone.

In addition to the actions we’re asking of our community, BUC has implemented the following measures to help ensure the safety and well-being of our beloved community.

- Online worship will continue with our new multiplatform worship format, which includes a live stream of the in-person service. Religious education classes will continue, with a multi-platform option to supplement in-person class.
- The heating and air conditioning (HVAC) systems in our building have been upgraded to a higher filtration level with the use of MERV-13 air filters. HVAC fans are set to run continuously during room occupancy, and satellite air filtration units are in use in classrooms and smaller meeting rooms.
- To reduce the risk of aerosol transmission between groups making sequential use of the same room, events are scheduled 30 minutes apart to provide time for air ventilation and filtration.
- To reduce risks associated with surface transmission, our custodial staff cleans occupied rooms on a daily basis. Hand sanitizer is available for use by congregants during BUC events.

Off-campus events:

- BUC and the Reopening Task Force are not responsible for setting rules for events held outside of our campus. Attendees should abide by rules set by the host or venue where an event is held.
- We encourage organizers to adhere to the principle of “active consent” to determine masking rules for off-campus events. Some congregants may be uncomfortable attending an event with unmasked participants. Before getting together, discuss your plans and ask what participants are comfortable with. If one or more persons are uncomfortable meeting without masks, we ask you to address these concerns in a way that honors our church covenant.

We have striven to find the right balance between meeting our need to experience in-person fellowship and ensuring we can do so in a safe way. It is important to recognize that the pandemic remains fluid, and we are prepared to make further changes to our plans as the need arises. We thank you all for your participation in our community and the work that we all do to be safe, healthy, and whole. We look forward to being with you soon.

Sunday Usher Signup

Our sanctuary will soon be open on Sundays again, which means WE NEED USHERS! Starting with our first multiplatform worship service in the sanctuary on September 12, we will need four ushers every Sunday morning from 10:00 am until 11:45 am. Click [HERE](#) for more details and to sign up for usher spots for the entire church year. The signup button is also on our [website](#) under Worship Links.



Usher Training Session

Saturday, September 11 | 10:00 am | Sanctuary

An usher training session will be held on Saturday, September 11 at 10 am in the sanctuary. Anyone planning on or interested in ushering is encouraged to attend. Please contact Usher Coordinator Janet Brown at 248-629-5783 with any questions about Sunday ushering.

Sunday Flower Dedications



Signups are open to dedicate flower arrangements for our chancel on Sunday mornings. You can dedicate a flower arrangement in honor of or in memory of a loved one, or in honor of a cause, milestone, or special occasion. Click [HERE](#) to sign up for spots for the entire church year. The signup button is also on our [website](#) under Worship Links.

Please contact coordinator Ginger Luckins at ginluckins@gmail.com with any questions about flower dedications.

Staff Reflections

“Gathering”



Rev. Mandy Beal
Senior Minister

Homecoming is always a special time for Unitarian Universalist congregations. The Sunday after Labor Day marks the beginning of a new church year. In a time when days and events have all blurred together, I’m looking forward to marking the beginning of something new.

Homecoming Sunday strikes the balance between the familiar and the new. We will gather with our traditional hymns and Water Communion, but we will certainly encounter differences this year. Our new multiplatform worship style will lead to changes in how we worship together (more on that later in a separate email). We won’t have coffee or doughnuts during what is now “social hour.” Our Director of Religious Education lives in another state! It will be different, but it will still be us.

Things will never be the same for our Beloved Community. I know that will stir up grief, but there is so much opportunity here, as well. We have a unique opportunity to ask questions about who we are and who we want to be. This is a time for deep discernment about how to bring the best of our past into the future. We get to be the BUC that we all love, while adapting to the fit the needs of our time.

Beloved, we’ve gotten good at adapting, even if we don’t always like it. All of this change can feel daunting, but we have to remember who we are. We come from hearty stock, people who did what needed doing. We care about our church and we love each other. We’ve come this far together. We have further to go. We have every reason to trust that we can keep going.



Abha Dearing
Co-Director of Music Ministry

“Here we are, gathered,
apart but together,
worshipping at the same flame.
Wandering, wondering
Questioning, arguing the worth
of our lives today.
Courage eludes us,
Our edges filed down.
An abundance of caution prevails.
Who are we? What are we?
How can we? Can I be enough?
I am today”

This is verse 1 of the lyrics to an unpolished song/hymn, “I Am Enough,” that has been percolating in our consciousness for some time. The Notes app says we completed it in December 2020. It feels disheartening when we realize our words hold true today and will certainly continue to for a long while to come.

Yet, we can Gather! We have learned enough about this virus and pandemic behavior that we know we can responsibly, safely be together with many precautions in place. That, to me, is better than staying away.

Gather has a “churchy” meaning to us. We think of “Gather Us In,” the Catholic hymn from Abha’s high-school and early teaching experiences. We think of “We Gather Together” at Thanksgiving, when we both sang it with a mass choir in a beautiful historic Orthodox church in college. Of course, singing “Gather the Spirit” sends the soul soaring. And we also think of gathering as a shepherding of sorts; of gathering children for learning, gathering things into their proper places, and gathering the Beloved Community purposefully together to accomplish important, daunting things.

This year, let us gather in whichever ways we can, in-person and virtual, with the intention that, no matter what this world brings us, we will build something greater than our own individual selves, together.



Steven Dearing
Co-Director of Music Ministry



Nico Van Ostrand
Director of Religious Education

As we prepare to gather in yet another new way this Fall, and as I re-imagine what it is to be part of BUC from two states over, I find myself coming back to the question of “why church?” over and over again. What is the purpose of gathering for church on Sunday mornings?

Our answers to this question probably differ, but since we’re all part of the BUC community, we all have at least once answer. For me, it’s about community and UU values—the 8 Principles which are central to our faith, but impossible to strive towards alone. These are the things that sustained me as “gathering” shifted to Zoom. These are the things that will ground me as “gathering” becomes something new yet again.

Gathering this Fall for RE will not mean always gathering together in the same room. Older grades will eventually have the option to join in-person or via Zoom. Younger kids might gather in the classroom, or they might gather with their families at home for Take-Home RE activities. BUCers of all ages will gather once a month for multiplatform All-Ages services.

But the core of religious education, and my answer to “why gather for church?”, is the common thread through it all. I’m facing this year’s version of “gathering” with anticipation and no small amount of faith that our values and connections will see us through.



Valerie Phillips
Administrator

Gathering is about necessity and fulfilling our needs. Often, it starts with our basic need for food. I remember learning in grade school about indigenous peoples in the area of Wisconsin where I grew up. I absolutely loved when we discussed hunter-gatherers. My mind is still full of visions of how I imagined they lived in the area. When hunters returned with animals from their hunt, they were used up completely, with no waste. The gatherers went out to find fruit, berries, nuts, seeds, tubers, vegetables, and other edible parts of plants. The gatherers had so much knowledge about what was safe to eat, and about other uses for what they gathered, like medicines and textiles.

Each individual would go out, gather what they could find, and return to the group. Every individual was important, and every tidbit they returned with was important. They would gather together to eat the food they brought to share with all. Each person contributed to the overall good of their community.

When people gather together, they build relationships and strengthen bonds. Their connection builds a community. I have learned that when we gather together and share what we are able to, even the smallest contributions are valuable. We can share food, money, time, and knowledge with our community, but sometimes just our presence is enough to be able to share kindness, support, and love with one another.



Andrew Schreck
Rental Coordinator

Gathering has taken on new forms in the last two years. What was once hugs and handshakes is now often a virtual “can you hear me?” or an in-person fist bump. Masked gatherings and online coffee meet-ups have often taken the place of drinks and food around a table.

We build new ways to be together because gathering is important to us and our community. Online meetings used to be largely for work purposes but now allow us to expand our world in new and meaningful ways—to see a new grandchild, a relative in a different country, or high-school friends now scattered across the country. These new means of gathering have become an additional way we

can build and maintain our communities.

The world has changed in so many ways and the thing that remained important were the connections. The gatherings, virtual or IRL (in real life), are still what matters. The importance of gathering will never go away, it just adapts to the new setting. I’m looking forward to gathering with our community once again in person and virtually.



Sara Constantakis
Communications Coordinator

“Gather Us In” was a common opening hymn at the all-school masses at St. Mary Magdalen, the Catholic parish where I attended school from kindergarten through 8th grade. Like Abha and Steven, this hymn sprang immediately to mind when I started thinking about this month’s theme, and its words and melody have been ringing through my brain frequently ever since. You can listen to a choir performance of it [here](#).

Many of the verses have a distinctly Catholic/Christian orientation (“the wine and the water”, “the bread of new birth”), but I detect a Universalist feel to the final verse:

Not in the dark of buildings confining
 Not in some heaven light years away
 But here in this place the new light is shining
 Now is the kingdom, now is the day

We have been confined to gathering in the buildings of our individual homes for Sunday morning worship for a long time, but on September 12, we will be opening our sanctuary for in-person worship for the first time in 18 months. Our gathering will be different than it was before. Though some of us will be physically gathered in the sanctuary, and some of us will be gathered virtually, we really will all be together.

The Universalist theology that is part of our faith tradition says that heaven is here on earth, and the hymn agrees: heaven is not “light years away,” but “here in this place.” I think we can draw inspiration from both this Catholic hymn and the beliefs of our Universalist forbears as we build a new kind of heaven on earth, here in this place—virtually or physically—together.



Joanne Copeland
Bookkeeper

So, at the beginning of summer, as the restrictions were being lifted, joy was in my heart. I could get together with my family, friends, and the choir (all of whom are vaccinated; I still have family members who are not vaccinated and that creates a problem with any family gatherings). And we did get together. The choir party was great! My grandniece's first birthday party was great! My high-school group, Hot Chics of '67, were able to get together and that was great! But, in the back of my mind, there is still the fear of the virus and any kind of gathering with more than a handful of people. And as the summer wears on and the Delta variant arrived with such vengeance, I'm pretty sure gatherings will decrease, at least for me personally. If only everyone would come together for the good of the country and play by the rules... if only.

Fall Rummage Sale Cancelled

In late August, the Rummage Committee made the difficult decision via vote to cancel this Fall's sale. We wanted to provide revenue for the church, fellowship for our congregation, and low-cost goods to our communities, but the continued threat of the pandemic and a major logistical problem with the sale proved insurmountable obstacles. THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU to everyone who signed up early to volunteer. In that regard, we were looking good.

But WAIT! This doesn't mean we're not doing anything! Stay tuned for news of an alternative. We may check some of those boxes yet!

—BUC Rummage Committee

From the Board



Donna Larkin Mohr
President, Board of Trustees

In mid-August, I was at BUC for Worship Associate training, where we discussed positive changes to our worship services. On the way home, I stopped at the Meijer in Oxford. The parking lot was full; and, as I walked through the aisles, I encountered over 100 people. Fewer than ten were wearing masks.

Our Reopening Task Force is asking everyone—vaccinated or not—to wear a mask. They have also asked that no food or beverages be served at any of our events. They are following science and logic and demonstrating a true caring for BUC. Sometimes changes are necessary for our health and safety.

The Board is busy planning for a Zoom retreat with Rev. Dan Hotchkiss to discuss our move from the Carver governance model to the Hotchkiss model. We are also supporting Rev. Mandy, Dick Cantley, and Jim Shettel as they work through all the issues related to the serious flooding in our basement. In addition to planning what to do to make our basement usable and functional, we must also understand how to stop or mitigate future flooding.

Unfortunately, Rummage had to be cancelled, which means we need to consider other options to help make up lost revenue while we deal with a deficit budget. We have been exploring various ways to do Stewardship, and we welcomed a youth member, Audrey Schreck, to our Board.

Each week I attend a Leader's Zoom with Presidents from various congregations throughout our region. As I listen, I hear concerns and questions that often mirror those at BUC. We are not alone! UUs everywhere are working diligently to assure a bright, just, and equitable future for all.

In faith,

Donna Larkin Mohr

President, Board of Trustees

Vespers Service

Monday, September 13 | 6:00 pm (FINAL SERVICE)



September's Vespers service will be the last monthly service for now. Join Rev. Mandy on Monday, September 13 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, September 13. The video will stay on our Facebook page for later viewing.

"5 Questions" on Facebook Live

Monday, September 27 | 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. September's guest will be Tom Raffel, Chair of the Reopening Task Force.

To watch live, visit the [Birmingham Unitarian Church Facebook page](#) at 6:00 pm on Monday, September 27. The video will stay on our Facebook page for later viewing.



Rev. Mandy and August guest Brian Schandavel, Chair of the Music Committee

Religious Education

Families: It's time to register for Religious Education! Visit our [website](#) to register and find out what's ahead for children and youth at BUC.

Everyone: The RE program can't exist without teachers! Interested in co-teaching just one or two Sundays a month, using a lesson plan and materials prepared for you ahead of time? Contact DRE Nico at nico.vanostrand@bucmi.org and we'll talk about what might be a good fit! Our greatest need is for youth group, which meets after service from 11:30-12:30.

Plate Collection

Our September plate collection recipient is **Communities United for Children (CUFC)** in support of BUC's partnership with Walt Whitman Elementary School in Pontiac, one of our cherished, long-time partners. Recognizing the impact of educational inequities based on economics and race, BUCers support this K-5 elementary school by stocking and operating a mobile library in the school, conducting a Bananagrams program, and tutoring. Communities United for Children is a nonprofit created by BUC for this program. Contact Mary Jo Ebert at maryjoebert@gmail.com for more information. A plate donation can be made at any time via the [BUC website](#), via Venmo username @BUCMI, or by mailing a check to the church office with "plate collection" on the memo line.

Getting to Know UU Is Coming Soon!

Getting to Know Unitarian Universalism (GTKUU) returns in October for our fall session. All are welcome to attend this introspective, interactive, and fun experience for anyone exploring Unitarian Universalism or BUC. You will examine your spirituality individually and with others and learn how BUC can serve as your spiritual home. GTKUU is hosted by the Membership Committee and led by Rob Davidson. The fall session will remain in a virtual-only format, using the curriculum that has been adapted for virtual learning and discussion. Four non-sequential classes will take place on the following Sundays on Zoom: October 10, October 24, November 7, and November 21. Classes start right after worship service and social hour and run from 12:00 to 1:30 pm. Zoom details are available on the BUC [calendar](#) and will be shared in the weekly update emails and on the BUC Facebook page. If you plan to attend, please RSVP to Rob Davidson at kathyd8082@gmail.com.

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. 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

Worship Services

Sundays | 10:30 am

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/196899450?pwd=RXJuNFpHdWMraENaZmFDWFVaSEExqUT09>

MULTI-
PLATFORM

(starting Sept. 12)

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>

VIRTUAL

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

Living by Heart

VIRTUAL

1st Mondays of the month | 7:00 pm

<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=YzVMZzZpQTthhb0lFUVhYYlk5Vy8vZz09>

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

September Events

Issues and Ale

VIRTUAL

Friday, September 10
6:00 pm

[https://zoom.us/j/95598383078?
pwd=S0ZuRVYyUE9CRnhYeWpJ
ZmlnVWINQT09](https://zoom.us/j/95598383078?pwd=S0ZuRVYyUE9CRnhYeWpJZmlnVWINQT09)

meeting ID: 955 9838 3078
passcode: 497199
dial-in: 253-215-8782

Humanists of BUC

VIRTUAL

“My Credo”
Sunday, September 19 | 4:30 pm

[https://zoom.us/j/98508572013?
pwd=My9QVEpsUStNQkp3czNtbkVMWHQ1Zz09](https://zoom.us/j/98508572013?pwd=My9QVEpsUStNQkp3czNtbkVMWHQ1Zz09)

meeting ID: 985 0857 2013
passcode: 456300
dial-in: 253-215-8782

5 Questions

Monday, September 27 | 6:00 pm

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

Usher Training

IN-PERSON

Saturday, September 11
10:00 am
Sanctuary

Vespers Service

Monday, September 13 | 6:00 pm

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

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