



# BUC

## The Deep Dive

Issue 1  
September 2022

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

Dear Ones, I am so excited to kick off this new quarterly publication, *The Deep Dive*. Over the past year, our staff team and Board President gave us the gift of their vulnerability by providing personal reflections on our worship themes. Many of you went out of your way to tell me how much it meant to you to be able to read those reflections, and gain a new level of insight into the personalities and values of the people in leadership positions in our church. I, too, was humbled and grateful for that opportunity. This year, we're going to expand on what people liked about those reflections by inviting lay leaders and staff members from across our spectrum of programs and fellowship groups to submit reflections. We're also addressing a common critique: how often you hear from us! By moving to a quarterly format, we hope to give a little more airtime to these reflections. All news and information about events will continue to appear in our weekly email and Sunday morning announcement slides. Moving forward, there will be no monthly newsletter.

So what exactly is it that we're diving into so deeply? Last year, our Board adopted a vision of ministry that will guide our decision-making and program planning through the end of the 2024 church year. That vision of ministry is:

- Foster a stronger culture of engagement, stewardship, and fellowship (have more fun, feel more connected)
- Direct our resources and decision-making toward fully and explicitly being anti-racist, anti-oppressive, and multicultural (fight racism, be more inclusive)
- Commit to meaningful action to significantly reduce consumption of non-renewable resources (be green)

That's a lot of words with really lofty ideals. Figuring out what all of this means for us is part of the journey, and giving our congregational leaders the opportunity to take us along as their thoughts develop will surely be very rewarding.

To start things off, I asked several committee chairs, other lay leaders, and a few staff members: What does it mean for our church to have a vision of ministry? In what ways does your program or your role in the church support this vision of ministry? In what ways does the vision support your program or your role? Their answers are in the following pages. It is with deep gratitude that I invite you to join in this adventure by reading and considering your own thoughts on this first BUC *Deep Dive*.

## Sara Constantakis

*Director of Congregational Life*

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“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

In my early years at BUC, I sometimes had a difficult time articulating what it was about this congregation that was different from other religious communities I had been a part of, and what moved me so deeply about being part of the BUC community. As I got more involved in social justice activities and a small group, became a Worship Associate, and then joined the staff as Communications Coordinator and now Director of Congregational Life, I gradually came to understand what it is about BUC that draws me to this community. And Glennon Doyle’s quote above encapsulates it pretty well, what we do here at BUC: “love each other and the world in superhuman ways.”

If you look up the definition of “ministry,” it mentions specifically the work of one person, a minister of religion or state. But here in this Unitarian Universalist congregation, “ministry” goes beyond that narrow definition. We *all* share in ministry at BUC. So when we talk about the vision of ministry, we’re talking about all of us and what we do here together. The church isn’t one person. It isn’t a building, or an association. The church is us. You and me and all of us. The person sitting next to you at a worship service on Sunday is the church. The person whose name or face is on a Zoom screen is the church. The person next to you serving food at a shelter or holding up a sign at a rally is the church. The person in your discussion group or sorting rummage items with you is the church. The people singing next to you in the choir and the kids in the RE class you’re teaching are the church.

So, our vision of ministry is a map to help take us—the church—where we’re going together. And we need that map because, though we are trying to love in superhuman ways, we are actually not superhuman, and we need guidance. It makes us stronger, more focused, more caring, and better stewards of the resources of our Beloved Community. I am realizing while writing this reflection that having a vision—a way forward, a place to go—helps answer my long-ago question about why BUC is a unique and meaningful place for me.

So how does my role support our vision of ministry? My role is focused on “foster[ing] a stronger culture of engagement, stewardship, and fellowship.” The things we have done and will be doing to have fun, engage, and connect with one another—Field Day, Small Group Ministry, birthday celebrations, game nights, pancake breakfasts—are what I’ll be coordinating and organizing as Director of Congregational Life. I am humbled and grateful to undertake this ministry here at BUC.

## Abha Dearing

### *Co-Director of Music Ministry*

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My high school Theatre Director, Roberta Campion, greatly impacted my life. As an impressionable teenager, I listened to her critique scenes with energy and passion and inspire actors to interpret lines with authenticity, as she demonstrated how to fully embody the art of communicating through the stage-arts in many ways. For Roberta, Theatre is her Religion. For me, Music is my Religion.

When I make music, hear music, coach others to collaborate on music, I am experiencing a spiritual moment, communing with the divine in the given space. As I consider music for the choir, or rehearse my singing with the band, I am asking questions: Who does this music serve? Why are we creating this moment in church? What needs are being filled by this piece?

I appreciate having a clear and detailed vision of ministry articulated at BUC. In fact, I have only recently realized that I truly love worship in many forms: the rites, the pageantry, the solemnity and quiet joy, the contemplation and communing of disparate people focused on one thing, if only just for the moment. The exercise of worshipping together with common purpose deeply stirs my soul.

As your Co-Director of Music Ministry, I take seriously the responsibility of bringing people together to create something meaningful. In action, this means that the choices of music *must* align with the message of the day, the month, the year. In collaboration with my Co-Director of Music Ministry Steven Dearing, Rev. Mandy, and Director of Religious Education Shannon Snideman, among others, it is imperative that each piece of music I suggest and then program connects to our vision of ministry.

Of course, my personal spiritual values align with our 8 Principles and this year, as the vision of ministry hones in on the over-arching themes of getting more BUC folx involved and the 7th and 8th Principles in particular, I am excited and energized to continue to work on presenting diverse music with the appropriate contextualization. This year, we can give more attention to our environment by being sure our choir is utilizing printed music in responsible ways, using electronics to read lyrics and music as much as possible, using natural light in the sanctuary when possible, turning air and lights off when not in use, and countless other small ways to help.

I am ready to dive into this new year with you, our Beloved Community.

## **Steven Dearing**

### *Co-Director of Music Ministry*

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We as a church have gone through a few changes in the last ten years, my tenure as a staffer. We've had ministers retire and others move on, the staff has changed significantly, and our visions as a church have been honed through different lenses.

Without a vision or goal in life, we tend to be a tad aimless as a society. We fall into patterns of election cycles, political conflict/wars, and how the stock market is doing. Our self-care goes down the ladder of priorities in order for our offspring to do better than us financially.

As a result, we encounter many people on a daily basis who dislike their occupation, are stuck in less-than-ideal relationships, or are just downright miserable.

I see our vision of music ministry at BUC as a means to spiritual enlightenment. This uplifting can be in the form of cerebral stimulation, a lightening of the heart, or an emotional reaction to the music heard on any given Sunday.

At BUC, we get a chance to hear our friends sing in the choir, and we get to hear outside musicians who bring their unique skills to us. We hear some of the best from the collection of 500 years of choral literature, and we hear popular music played and written by our contemporaries.

That mix of familiar and new is stimulating to the soul. When such music gels with the monthly and weekly topic under our ministry as a church, that soul stirring leads to soulful action and purpose.

That's how *we* create the change that we want during our time on Mother Earth.

## **Mary Jo Ebert**

### *Social and Environmental Justice Council*

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The BUC vision of ministry establishes areas of focus for the next two years for growth, learning, and service within the broader congregational mission. There is a direct alignment of Social and Environmental Justice program goals, particularly those of racial justice, inclusion, and environmental action, with the two visions of ministry that call for being anti-racist, anti-oppressive, and multicultural, and reducing consumption of non-renewable resources. Our congregation adopted two resolutions in May—the 8th Principle and Sustainability Plan—clear statements of commitment to those areas of the vision. In addition, we strive to build connection and fellowship in the work of social justice and community service, which speaks to the vision of a culture of engagement, stewardship, and fellowship. I'm asking myself, "How can this vision prompt us to imagine who and what we aspire to be? How might we grow and adapt, not only in broad platitudes but also in definable and actionable goals?" I think that adaptation is important because people's reasons for seeking out a church community and their expectation of what it can be in their lives is evolving. And while societal participation in faith communities is declining, there is a hunger to be part of communities grounded in principle and willingness to serve a greater good. I see this as a call for myself and fellow BUCers to consider this vision in our personal ministries and each area of congregational life. It's an invitation to draw upon ideas, aspirations, and needs across our congregation and programs and the ever-changing wider community, to evolve in ways that will welcome and engage and excite people.

## Cindy Goldman

### *Living by Heart*

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The first time I read the request for written reflections on the vision of ministry, I was at a loss. What does this mean? It seems so wordy and complex. My mind shut down when I tried to read it. Luckily, I was reminded by one of my Living by Heart friends that we are visual people. I could not visualize what the intention could be for this vision of ministry. In order to understand it better, I knew I needed to do two things. First, break it down into manageable concepts, and secondly, figure out what this vision has to do with spirituality. When I facilitated a recent Living by Heart session, I suggested that the breakdown for the vision of ministry is: 1. Fellowship, 2. Anti-racism, and 3. Save Planet Earth. I got a chorus of “oh yes, now I get it” from our group. Spirituality gives us a sense of connection to something bigger than ourselves—so does fellowship, saving our earth, and inclusivity of all humankind. These concepts are universal and important as we search for meaning in our lives.

Once I had a clear understanding of how spiritual our vision of ministry can be for me, and for my fellow collective BUC members, I became ready to engage! Here I am, writing my reflection and excited to find ways to support this vision of ministry. I perceive that our Living by Heart group provides connection once a week as we give mutual support to each other through our common love of seeking spirituality through poetry, writing, and art. In our efforts to care for our earth and be inclusive of all humanity, we frequently read, write, and create art on various topics including anti-racism, multicultural expression, and reducing consumption, among others. Living by Heart has been supporting the BUC vision of ministry long before we knew it existed. What this vision means for us is that BUC is a spiritual home which supports and connects our very special Living by Heart group to the wider fellowship.



**By Sookie Darlington  
of Living by Heart**

The painting on this newsletter’s front page is also by Sookie Darlington

## Vision of Ministry in Art

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**By Kimery Campbell  
of Living by Heart**

## **Donna Larkin Mohr**

*President, Board of Trustees*

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What does it mean for our church to have a vision of ministry and what, specifically, does it mean for the Board of Trustees? The vision itself is:

- Foster a stronger culture of engagement, stewardship, and fellowship
- Direct our resources and decision-making toward fully and explicitly being anti-racist, anti-oppressive, and multicultural
- Commit to meaningful action to significantly reduce consumption of non-renewable resources

The vision is powerful because it says our time, talent, and dollars will go toward creating the new world we often dream of but have not always fully understood or embraced. We have several people at BUC who have diligently worked to bring positive changes into the life of our congregation. They are often the first to support the vision.

What do we mean by vision? Many of us may think of our eyes, what we see, but a vision is so much more. It is not just what we see; it is what we feel, what we do, what we embrace, what brings us alive. We have heard or read: “To change the world, I change myself first.” As your Board, we are constantly faced with changes. In our work, we strive to create policies to guide our Executive and our staff, so we may spend time learning and planning.

As William Houff wrote: “Like a bowl catching rainwater, ritual is the form we put forth to catch the spiritual. We must leave some part of our lives ‘out of control’ so the unexpected can happen. We must leave a hole in space and time. Sometimes it’s scary to decide how much to structure and how much to leave out-of-control. The hole in time is the sabbath, the holiday, the feast, the celebration. It is the time we take to play with the gods, the Great Spirit interacting with our own, in order to be fully human.” The Board strives to be fully human and is consistently challenged by how much to leave “out-of-control” and avoid getting into too much detail that has been delegated to our very capable staff. We, the Board, have our rituals, as we try to grasp the spiritual and develop connections, which is often demonstrated when Rev. Mandy leads our check-in.

We invite all members to attend our meetings, observe what we do and don’t do, and comment at the end of our meeting. We collectively believe our vision of ministry will lead us into a bold and beautiful new future. Obviously, it means change, which—in the end—accompanies death as the only certainty in our life. Join us as we learn to embrace change, become anti-racist, anti-oppressive, multicultural, reduce consumption of non-renewable resources, and engage more deeply with each other.

## **Brian Schandavel**

### *Music Committee Chair*

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#### Vision of Ministry in Music and Song

*Foster a stronger culture of engagement, stewardship, and fellowship.* This is a key reason for having music at our church. Music has a unique power that can touch our selfhood. As we engage in the practice of music, we sound together to amplify the messages that are in the lyric or text and the emotions that can arise from the musical composition. We practice stewardship when we give of ourselves in body and spirit to the music at BUC. Finally, there are bonds of fellowship being created each time we participate in music together, whether as a soloist, a member of a musical group, or as an attentive congregant/visitor, joining in with the gift of music being offered to all at BUC.

*Direct our resources and decision-making toward fully and explicitly being anti-racist, anti-oppressive, and multicultural.* Music is a human universal and is consistent with the Universalism we practice when we honor cultural diversity by being respectful of the musical forms presented from other cultures or those originating from marginalized groups within our own society.

*Commit to meaningful action to significantly reduce consumption of non-renewable resources.* Music can bring awareness to the existential challenges we face as a modern society and hopefully inspire us to meaningful action. It can be a “Finest Worksong,” to quote the title of a song by the band REM. There is much music, sacred and secular, reflecting our 7th Principle, respecting the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

## **Ed Sharples**

### *Pastoral Care Associates*

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How do Pastoral Care Associates fit in? “With what?” you might ask. And the answer is simple. The work of Pastoral Care Associates fits into the life of BUC because we care about the spiritual and physical health of congregants.

Ministry itself is designed to serve. But in a large congregation, it is impossible for the minister to make as many calls to church members as she might like. Hence the need for associates who work within Rev. Mandy’s guidance. In addition, we are moving through an online seminar largely written by UUA staff. Ours is a servant (serving) relationship.

We are a small group of five volunteers who make phone and personal calls to those who come to our attention via Joys and Sorrows or by other means. When working with church members who are ill, we represent BUC and are fully present to their situation and spiritual needs. It is a deeply joyful connection for each of us.

Pastoral Care Associates came together during the ministry of Rev. Douglas Gallagher, continued with Rev. Kathy Hurt, and now are being given careful attention by Rev. Mandy. It is a richly rewarding service, and we encourage congregants in need to reach out to us. Conversations are held in confidence.

## **Amy Smalley**

### *Revenue Committee Chair*

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A vision of ministry identifies key areas in which we would like to make significant progress. The vision will guide how we direct our time, talent, and treasure to move BUC forward. Just as I endeavor to let a Sunday sermon guide me in the coming week, so does a vision guide our actions in service to the mission of our church. I believe that the three components of our vision of ministry will unify our efforts as a beloved community and create new ways for us to be and work together.

The Revenue Committee's role in supporting the vision of ministry is two-fold: setting a revenue calendar each June that gives attention without overlap to our key fundraising efforts, and working to streamline and improve our fundraising efforts to achieve the revenue targets in the budget. Fundraisers support the general fund and are an important part of supporting our operations, programming, and outreach.

As we approach fundraising this year, the vision of ministry will be an important reference point to guide our efforts. How do the events bring us together as a beloved community, in the most inclusive ways possible, with the least impact to the planet? And with each fundraiser, how can we improve with respect to each part of the vision? The Revenue Committee will hold the vision of ministry as central to our work in the year ahead.

## Shannon Snideman

*Director of Religious Education*

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Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu.

I am a person through other people. My humanity is tied to yours.

– Zulu Proverb

Following my Bridging into the young adult world, I found myself with this unrelenting urge to serve others. I was so fortunate to have had the guidance and support of the DREs around me to channel this energy into my service years in the AmeriCorps program City Year. It's an experience that I highly recommend for all Bridging youth. Through my service, I was able to gain a wider perspective on the issues concerning children and families in southeast Michigan. It allowed me to put all of the UU Principles into practice daily.

City Year corps members draw inspiration from several sources, much like Unitarian Universalists. A collection of stories, called Founding Stories, served as my main source of inspiration to get me through the challenging moments. Many of these stories you have probably heard before, like "Stone Soup" and "The Starfish Story." There are many others that I hope to share with you one day, but the one that I'd like to share with you now is called "Ubuntu."

A shortened version of the Zulu proverb "Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu," Ubuntu is the belief in a universal bond of sharing and respect that connects all of humanity, and it is a spiritual foundation of South African society. It also acknowledges both the rights and the responsibilities of every citizen in promoting individual and societal well-being. Ubuntu has the power to help us build an inclusive, respectful, and vibrant community, nation, and world. We can put the spirit of Ubuntu—respect, human dignity, compassion, and community—to work in our daily lives through our interactions with others.

This concept is not foreign to Unitarian Universalists. Recognizing the humanity within ourselves and through others is woven through our 8 Principles. This year in Religious Education, we are focusing on community building. As we continue to build a Beloved Community here at BUC, let the spirit of Ubuntu remind us that we are people through other people.