The BUC Big Picture

November 2026

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November 1

"Once Upon a Time" (Part One of a Two-Part Sermon Series)

The human mind is very complex. It is said to be comprised of the unconscious, the ego, and the superego, and it can time travel—backward via memory and forward via the imagination. Another aspect of the human mind is its tendency to develop narrative, which is fundamental to how one understands oneself and one's place in the world. How do you understand yourself and your place in the world? Have you ever wondered how others understand themselves and their place in the world? We likely never ponder these questions. Yet they are vitally important, both for our sake and others'.

Dr. Alexander Riegel
Music from guest musicians the John Hammer Trio

November 8

"One If by Land, Two If by Sea" (Part Two of a Two-Part Sermon Series)

Most Americans grow up learning about Paul Revere's ride, when he is said to have shouted: "The British are coming! The British are coming!" The truth is, he never shouted this famous phrase. Had he done so, the British troops, who had already infiltrated Massachusetts, surely would have shot him dead! There is another falsehood about Paul Revere's ride; namely, that it was a solo act. It was not. A number of others rode with Revere on that famous night. Do you know their names? Probably not. That's a problem! Why? Well, join us for this follow up to Dr. Riegel's November 1 sermon, on the importance of narrative, and find out.

Dr. Alexander Riegel
Music from the Sound Messengers band

November 15

"Love's Wit to Win"

Unitarian Universalists have a long-standing history of non-creedalism and social justice. In sum, these two aspects of our liberal religious tradition have implied radical inclusivity. That is, no one has been turned away because of their beliefs or their identity. Is Unitarian Universalism as radically inclusive today as it has been historically?

Dr. Alexander Riegel
Music from the Chalice Choir

November 22

"Marcus Aurelius' Stoic Wisdom for Modern Life"

Marcus Aurelius was a Roman Stoic philosopher. Stoic philosophy is a humanistic philosophy rooted in astute psychological insight and application. Dr. Riegel will reflect on a number of Aurelius' philosophical prescriptions for living a stoic life.

Dr. Alexander Riegel
Music from the Dearing Concert Duo

November 29

TBD

November Plate Sharing

ReLeaf Michigan

The recipient of our November plate sharing is ReLeaf Michigan, a tree planting and education organization established in 1988. ReLeaf is Michigan's only statewide tree-planting nonprofit organization, working with communities and organizations throughout Michigan to protect and restore our urban tree canopies. Their mission is to educate the public on the value of trees and how to properly select, plant, and maintain them.

Founded by some of the most respected arborists in the state and building on lifetimes of green expertise, ReLeaf Michigan plants the Right Tree in the Right Place at the Right Time for the Right Purpose to ensure each tree thrives for generations to come.

ReLeaf Michigan has worked with over 700 communities across Michigan. Working with community volunteers, they have planted more than 33,500 trees on public property in Michigan's cities, townships, and villages.

Plate donations can be made via cash or check during worship services or at any time via our online giving portal (choose "Plate Collection" from the drop-down) or Venmo (send payment to @BUCMI and note "Plate Collection").

Minister's Message

Dr. Alexander Riegel

Alexander's Meander
Walking the Talk: Should There Be a No-Exception Clause to Our Principles?

As we enter the political season (the midterm election is upon us), I have noticed the political rhetoric among my liberal friends ratcheting up again. While I think it is important that we liberals be actively involved in politics, I think it is equally important that we be conscientious about the manner in which we are involved in

politics. I am particularly thinking about the language we use to state our positions and frame the positions of those with whom we do not agree. Our language and behavior are too often toxic.

Why are we given to toxic language and behavior when it comes to things about which we are passionate, like politics? The reason is that politics are about core values and when it comes to core values, we have strong egoic reactions/defenses. It's part of the nature of the beast. This raises what is for me the principal challenge of living the liberal religious life; namely, that we are called to principles that challenge our natural (and often negative) egoic tendencies.

It is important to remember the principles that unite us as liberal religious people, from our First Principle (the inherent worth and dignity of every person) to the Seventh Principle (the interdependent web of existence). Because if we don't remember (and act upon) these principles, our identity as liberal religious people means nothing. By identifying as liberal religious people, i.e., Unitarian Universalists, we opt into a vision of the world that calls us to our better selves. That calling is a challenge for us to live out these principles at all times and with all people.

Nevertheless, from time to time, especially during the political season, we seem to feel that there are exceptions to our principles. We seem to feel that the inherent worth and dignity of every person is a principle with which we can dispense when another person/people doesn't meet our expectations of how he/she/they should show up in the world. The problem with this is that nothing about the First Principle (or any of the others) suggests that we should make such exceptions. You get the gist…

So, as we approach this political season (and indeed, at all times), let us remember that the principles we profess as liberal religious people require us to show up in the world in a certain way. That is, we are required to make our best effort to bring our behavior in line with the principles we profess. Anything short of this is to fail to walk our talk. I think Gandhi said it best when he said: "My life is my message."

Dr. Riegel

Religious Education Musings

Shannon Snideman, Director of Religious Education

I want to extend my deepest gratitude to everyone who has answered the call to help steward our Religious Education program! I am incredibly moved by the response to our volunteer sign-ups. We have nearly all of our spots filled through December, and it feels wonderful to know that we have so much of the year ahead of us covered. Even more, it has been such a treat to hear about people's spiritual leanings, personal interests, and the experiences they're excited to share with our children and youth. Thank you for bringing your time, your gifts, and yourselves to this program!

For the past few years, we've used curriculum packets from Soul Matters, which offered wonderful resources and supported our program in many ways. With the new direction in which we are moving with Religious Education at BUC, there isn't one solid curriculum that currently exists. I am creating that programming as we are going along. While that takes a bit more time and planning, it has also been incredibly rewarding! It gives us room to follow our curiosity, make meaningful connections across traditions, and create special opportunities for learning that reflect the interests and gifts of our community.

One such opportunity has been the Sky Tour I led on October 11. The impetus for this stems from my own personal interests. I studied and taught astronomy as an undergraduate and later worked as a planetarian at the Michigan Science Center, where I led star tours and shared stories about the constellations, planets, stars, and galaxies visible in our night sky. I've missed sharing that part of myself with others, and it has been a joy to discover a new way to bring that passion into our Religious Education program. While we don't have a smooth domed ceiling to project onto like a planetarium, we have an old projector that projects a nice big screen onto an open wall, and access to a virtual planetarium program called Stellarium. It's enough to provide some visual connections to the things that I am talking about in my Sky Tour.

Over the past month, we've been exploring Earth-Centered Traditions, many of which invite us to deepen our relationships with the natural world and the cycles of the sun, moon, and stars. This made astronomy a natural fit into our exploration. My Sky Tour explored the difference between astronomy—the scientific study of the cosmos—and astrology, which interprets the movements and positions of celestial bodies in relation to human lives and earthly events.

Both astronomy and astrology have their places in many faith traditions around the world, but there are some distinctions that I wanted to name, including what is meant by the "Zodiac constellations." First of all, constellations are not just star patterns—they are regions of the sky, like states or counties on a map. What makes the Zodiac constellations unique is that the sun appears to pass through this part of the sky. When the sun is in that constellation, it is considered your astrological "sun sign." However, in order to observe this constellation for yourself, you'll have to look when it is up in the nighttime sky at the *opposite* time of the year. For many years, there were twelve Zodiac constellations: Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces. However, there is a 13th constellation that the sun technically passes through named Ophiuchus. You can explore this for yourself using a sky map like Stellarium, which you can download onto your phone for night-sky viewing on the go.

My goal with this Sky Tour was to broaden our understanding of the night sky, both scientifically and culturally. One of my favorite features of Stellarium is the ability to change its "sky culture" and explore the different stories people have seen written among the stars. For time immemorial, people around the world have looked up at the night sky and found patterns in the stars. These patterns have helped people make sense of the world around them, guided navigators across vast distances, and inspired stories passed down through generations. Many of the constellation and star names familiar to us today come from Greek, Roman, and Arab traditions, but these represent only a small part of the world's rich celestial heritage. Different cultures have seen different patterns, given them different names, and woven them into stories that reflect their own histories and understandings of the world. Stellarium offers a wonderful way to explore and appreciate this diversity,

reminding us that even when we look up at the same sky, we may see and find meaning in very different things.

I hadn't initially planned on making the Sky Tours a series, but I've been delighted by how naturally they've grown out of our RE programming. Each new connection opens up another opportunity to explore the traditions we're learning about in a different way. I'm tentatively planning our next Sky Tour for November 22, when we'll turn our attention to Indigenous sky stories and traditions. That plan also grew out of a conversation with a congregant who is interested in helping with RE and shared some of his own astronomy knowledge with me. I'm really looking forward to seeing what we might create together!

There is so much possibility unfolding in Religious Education right now, and I couldn't be more excited. Thank you to everyone who has signed up to volunteer, shared an interest or an idea, or simply helped make room for something new. I'm grateful to be building this program alongside you, and I'm excited for all the ways our children, youth, and the adults learning alongside them will grow through this journey together!

Music Memos

Abha Dearing, Co-Director of Music Ministry

The autumn season seems to bring with it some melancholy and somber energy. The musical life of our church has spirit, and this comes in many different forms.

Spirited music can be sung with high energy and a dance feel that is collaborative and welcoming in its raucous delivery; or it can be gentle, soothing, and reflective, inviting the congregation to think on an idea and rest for a time.

I am appreciative that the BUC Choir is able to sing soulful music and rise to the challenges the music holds for them. We have folks who are or were professional musicians and we have folks who do not read music but aspire to learn and join their voices with others for a larger achievement beyond what they alone can do.

Also, the band and choir have been working hard to align our musical choices with Dr. Riegel's message. We recognize that this does not always mean that everything aligns. Rather, we aspire to complement and support the sermon and service themes, while also touching on bigger-picture ideas.

We are always open to including and sharing music aspects with the amateur and professional musicians in the congregation. Please let Steven (who handles all admintrative duties and leads the Sound Messengers and worship service music) or Abha (who directs the BUC Choir and all singing aspects) know if you are curious and wish to participate in music in any way!

Membership Matters

Sara Constantakis, Director of Congregational Life

As I reflected on what to write for this month's *Big Picture*, I kept returning to a metaphor that has been on my mind since Dr. Riegel's October 25 sermon: the river as a way of understanding life, change, and our life together as a congregation. "Life flows just like a river," Dr. Riegel said. "And when you're staring at the river, and you don't know what's coming around the bend, you're just there waiting to see what's next…. You're in the flow with the river." He went on to say that, similarly, "you can be in flow with life. But not if you're only going to be okay if what comes around the bend next is what you think it should be…. If you have an agenda for the flow of life, it's going to constantly be disrupted by your expectations."

These words reminded me of another piece I've saved in my folder of reflection inspiration, written by Rev. Sean Neil-Barron, one of the ministers of Foothills Unitarian in Fort Collins, Colorado. Rev. Sean also uses the river as a metaphor, but focuses on our responsibility to care for it, particularly in the context of social justice work. He writes: "Living beside a river, you know that rivers are never static. And it is a relationship. You clear the debris after a flood…. You remove the trash. You monitor the temperature. You count the fish. River-keeping is not glamorous work. It is patient, seasonal, and never finished. It is the work of people

who understand that the health of the whole system depends on a thousand small acts of tending…. people who understand that the river is an ecosystem, not a pipeline. A pipeline moves one thing in one direction. An ecosystem is layered, interconnected, full of species that depend on each other in ways that aren't always visible."

Beyond the river metaphor, Rev. Sean's words also bring to mind our Seventh Principle: respect for the interdependent web of all existence, of which we are a part. Like a river ecosystem, our beloved community is made up of countless relationships, visible and invisible, each affecting the health and vitality of the whole. We are not simply individuals moving in the same direction toward a predetermined destination. We are interconnected people, continually shaping and being shaped by one another.

Together, these two reflections offer a way of thinking about both our own lives and our life together at BUC. We are called to move with the river rather than insist that it follow our preferred course. At the same time, we are called to tend the river: to care for our relationships and nurture the conditions in which everyone can flourish.

That balance can be challenging for those of us whose thinking tends toward the progressive, growth-oriented, and—yes—anxious (raising my hand here). We want to know what comes next! We want to see around the bend so we can prepare, make plans, and feel confident that we're heading in the right direction. Uncertainty can feel uncomfortable, especially when we care deeply about where we're going.

This manifests in our life at BUC, too, as we grow and nurture our beloved community. What will our congregation look like in five, ten, or twenty years? What should we be preparing for now? How can we make wise decisions that will sustain our community into the future?

In some ways, of course, we need a plan. (Thank you, Strategic Planning Team!) Thoughtful planning is one way we care for our congregation and take responsibility for its future. But planning cannot tell us everything about what lies ahead, nor can it account for all the ways we will change as we grow together. Our Unitarian Universalist values call us to hold both intention and openness: to work

toward our goals while remaining willing to learn, change, and to discover possibilities we cannot yet imagine.

Perhaps our task, then, is not to choose between planning and trusting the river, but to learn how to do both. We can make thoughtful decisions without pretending to control every outcome. We can tend the ecosystem of our congregation by listening to one another, welcoming different perspectives, nurturing our relationships, and caring for those who might otherwise be left behind. We can recognize that the health of our community depends not only on where we hope to go, but also on how we travel together.

And we can practice letting go of the expectation that the river must take us exactly where we think it should. The future of our beloved community will be shaped by the many people who contribute to it, by circumstances we cannot foresee, and by possibilities that emerge only when we remain open to one another. Our work is to participate faithfully in that unfolding—to care, to build, to repair, to imagine, and to trust that we do not have to know every bend in the river to keep moving forward together.

Near the close of his reflection, Rev. Sean offers these words: “stop clenching. Put your hands in the water and drink. The river was here before us. It will be here after. Our job was never to force it or to win it or to finish it. Our job was to tend it, to trust it, to let it nourish us and carry us and change us into people we couldn’t have predicted, toward something no committee designed and no ballot measure named. And when it arrives looking nothing like what we imagined, we’ll know it came from the river.”

May we trust the river of our beloved community, not by giving up our responsibility to shape its course, but by remembering that we are part of something larger than any one of us can direct. May we tend the relationships that sustain us, remain open to what we cannot yet see, and find the courage to welcome a future that may surprise us. And may we have faith that, even when the river carries us somewhere unexpected, we can meet what comes with compassion, curiosity, and love. May it be so.

Board of Trustees Update

BUC Sponsors Abby Schreck in UU Ministerial Training

At the September Board meeting, the Board of Trustees voted unanimously that BUC should be a congregational sponsor for Abby Schreck as she works toward her goal of becoming a UU minister. Abby is in her first year of a Masters of Divinity at Harvard Divinity School and is on a full scholarship.

Many BUCers know Abby because she grew up attending BUC and is a fourth-generation UU, following parents Andrew and Kris Schreck and grandparents Rich and Karen Schreck. Abby earned a BA from the University of Michigan in Social Theory and Practice, American Culture, and Women's and Gender Studies. She wrote an honors thesis about UU ministry as part of her program.

Securing a congregational sponsor is part of the process of achieving fellowship with the UUA and allows registration with the Ministerial Formation Network. Sponsorship provides evidence that an applicant is actively committed to UU purposes and principles. Sponsorship does not include financial support. As part of the master's program and UUA process, Abby will complete training at two field education sites, most likely closer to Boston, and complete an internship with formal review processes. She is open to the possibility of preaching at BUC at a time when she'd be back in Michigan.

We are proud to offer our support as part of Abby's journey to becoming a UU minister.

In faith,

Your BUC Board of Trustees for 2026-2027:

President Mary Jo Ebert; Vice President Harper West; Treasurer Keith Ensroth; Secretary Bill Fox; Trustees Donna Cunningham, Art Hillman, and Bette Moen

BUC Strategic Planning

Strategic Plan Implementation Stage Begins… with You

Dear BUC Members and Friends:

It's your turn, and all it involves is some reading.

The Strategic Planning Team invites you to get comfortable and review the Strategic Pillars and Goals that our Board of Trustees has approved for the next three years. Provided here, the goals form the basis of the Plan Implementation Stage and join the vision, mission, and values to guide BUC in building our future.

Whether heard in listening labs, goals validation meetings, or one-on-one conversations, many of your voices were included in the development of these goals. When you read on…

What we think you'll see:

- The first three strategic pillars are based directly on our mission, with a fourth pillar designed to support everything we do.
- Each pillar features four to five goals shaped by weeks of input and focused on our stated desire to develop ourselves and our community to help improve the wider world.
- In general, the strategic pillar approach is a way to organize and focus our work. It will help us synch up current initiatives and decide what new efforts or resource shifts might be vital to meeting our goals.

What we hope you'll see:

- There's a role for you in an area you already feel passionate about or want to learn about.
- Answering a future call for volunteers on a committee or team will help you develop lifelong friendships while strengthening our beloved community.

Next Steps

A Plan Implementation Team is being formed to support church staff and groups as they pursue initiatives aligned with our strategic goals.

If you are interested in this team's coaching and progress-tracking role, please contact Chris Slon or Drieka DeGraff, who are transitioning to the Implementation Team.

As Kasey Alderete, Barb Eschner, and Kevin Kozlowski sign off from the Strategic Planning Team, all five of us appreciate your ongoing support for strategic planning. You are building BUC's future!

BUC Strategic Plan: Goals by Strategic Pillar

Pillar 1: Deepen Spiritual & Intellectual Life

1.1 Lifelong Learning & Spiritual Growth

Offer clear pathways for personal development anchored in an adult religious education program that connects existing initiatives and leverages UUA resources.

1.2 Whole-Sunday Experience

Design the full Sunday arc, from pre-service conversation through worship and sermon to coffee hour and beyond, so every person leaves inspired and carrying something meaningful into the week.

1.3 Participatory Arts & Music Programming

Expand arts and music culture from performance-focused to participation-focused. Develop low-barrier opportunities for congregants to make and share creative work as well as experience it.

1.4 Youth as Integral Part of the Congregation

Involve our youth as unique and genuine contributors to worship, service, and the community. Equip young people for lives of meaning, ethical

agency, and civic participation, ideally as adult members of a UU church of their choosing.

Pillar 2: Cultivate a Thriving, Welcoming Community

2.1 Culture of Community Care

Foster an empathetic community where members genuinely know one another, pastoral and peer care are visible and accessible, and the community actively renews itself through the power of relationships.

2.2 Whole-Family Connection

Create an environment where the whole family finds meaningful involvement. Integrate children's experiences, parent participation, and multi-generational connection so they build on each other rather than operate in parallel silos.

2.3 A Sense of Belonging for Everyone

Offer fellowship programming across identities, life stages, and household circumstances, reinforcing that BUC is a place of genuine belonging for every person it welcomes, wherever they are in life.

2.4 Member Engagement & Retention

Build a structured pathway from first visit to sustained engagement, with multiple entry points, clear navigation, and active follow-up so no newcomer must find their own way in. Retain existing members by tracking engagement, surfacing unmet needs, and reaching out when people begin to drift.

Pillar 3: Lead Meaningful Action in the World

3.1 Whole-Congregation Commitment to Meaningful Action

Expand justice initiatives from the work of dedicated subgroups to a shared congregational commitment. Provide opportunities to contribute at every level of participation and ensure that the collective impact of BUC's work is visible to the whole congregation.

3.2 Innovative Response to a Changing World

Cultivate a congregational practice of actively attending to shifts in the world, community, and BUC's own context. Respond with creative, innovative forms of meaningful action that keep BUC's engagement with the world fresh, relevant, and effective.

3.3 Increased Collaboration with Other UU Congregations

Continue to develop partnerships with other UU congregations in joint worship services, educational programs, and justice initiatives. This type of mutual support will strengthen participating churches as well as build awareness of Unitarian Universalism in the wider community.

3.4 Sustained Community Partnerships

Commit to two to three ongoing collaborations in Metro Detroit with nonprofit community organizations, interfaith partners, or justice groups, shifting from episodic service events to relationships that define BUC as a consistent civic actor.

Pillar 4: Strengthen the Organizational Foundation

4.1 Development & Support of Staff & Volunteers

BUC relies on the effort of both paid staff and volunteers. Ensure that all are set up to succeed with a clear sense of purpose, support to do their work, recognition for their contribution, and a smooth hand-off to successors. Identify and develop future leaders.

4.2 Integrated Communications Strategy

Plan messaging and narratives that speak effectively to two audiences: people who don’t know BUC yet and those who are already here. Ensure that the tone, core values, and community identity remain consistent in all our internal and external communications.

4.3 Institutional Memory through Leadership Change

Document procedures, keep easily accessible records, and pass knowledge along so we don’t lose what we’ve learned when someone steps away from a role.

4.4 A Resilient Financial Model for a Thriving Congregation

Keep BUC on steady financial footing for the long term. Plan for less reliance on high-effort fundraising events, fresh approaches to the annual stewardship campaign, and diversification of income sources. Spend in accordance with our stated priorities as described in the four strategic pillars.

4.5 Stewardship of BUC's Campus for Vitality & Sustainability

Take good care of our grounds and buildings and make the most of our spaces for a vibrant community and environment. That means ensuring the safety and security of our facilities, keeping the place up and improving it over time, and handling rentals and shared use thoughtfully. A well-kept, well-used campus supports the life of the congregation and protects its finances for the future.

Meet BUC's Flamekeepers

By Tanya Nordhaus

As many of you know, I have interviewed many congregants about their connection to BUC and their lives. Each month, I introduce you to three congregants. This month, I introduce you to Cindy Goldman, John Hammer, and Donna Larkin Mohr.

Cindy Goldman joined BUC in 2014 after years attending Rabbi Sherwin Wine's Birmingham Temple with her Jewish husband. Many of you will remember Rabbi Wine, who was a popular pulpit guest here at BUC. At BUC, Cindy was drawn to Penny Hackett-Evans's Living by Heart writing and art group early on and joined it in 2011. She is currently a dedicated Zoom host and has done a few other things over the years, like Pastoral Care, the Memorial Service Committee, and Small Group Ministry, but Living by Heart is her passion. She has been a very active member of that group. Cindy was born in a town of 400 people in Nebraska but grew up in the big city of Stanton, Nebraska with her parents, five siblings, and about 1,100 other residents. Fast forward, Cindy and her husband have two adult children and one grandson. She worked for Reuters, and after earning her Master's in Counseling, she became—you guessed it—a counselor. Cindy likes journaling, reading, and cooking. She used to play soccer quite a bit, so now she enjoys watching and following it.

John Hammer and his wife, Pat, joined BUC in 1976. John has served on many committees, including the Board of Trustees for 6 ½ years and the Music, Facilities, and Nominating Committees. As an architect, John sat on building committees for both the sanctuary addition and the kitchen and social hall expansion. He said serving on both committees represented not only some of his most meaningful experiences at BUC, but in his life. John has sung in the choir for many, many years, and when they sang at the dedication of the new sanctuary, he was so overcome, so choked up that his words just wouldn't come out. John has played the piano since he was 4 ½ and continues to today, sometimes for us here at BUC. Lucky us! John and Pat spent 10 weeks car camping in Europe with their boys, who were 14 and 17. And John's long-time career as a mausoleum architect took him to Italy about a dozen times to look at marble. He took Pat about half the time when they extended their visit, and they both became Italophiles, learning the history and language.

Donna Larkin Mohr may have come to BUC in 2013, but she has been a Unitarian since the 70s, when her friend suggested that her young family check out the Unitarian church in San Diego. On their first day, their two young children came back absolutely covered in mud after being stripped down and allowed to run around and play in the mud. Donna, her husband, and their children had found their religious home. Here at BUC, Donna served on the board for 6 years, 3 years as President. She has also chaired the Green Sanctuary Committee and led a small group. When Donna was young, her dad was a labor lobbyist, so she grew up around politics. When she was a junior and senior in high school, she worked for her state assemblyman. In 1960, she got to work a Kennedy rally, where Kennedy stopped and looked her right in the eye, and Frank Sinatra was the featured musician. She also sat people at a political event where she thought, "There are more stars in this room right now than there are in the sky outside." For a young person, does it get any better than that?

Program News & Info

BUC Thanksgiving Potluck

Thursday, November 26 | 10:00 am – 6:00 pm (Meal ~ 3:00 pm)

Last year's BUC Thanksgiving Potluck was a wonderful day of food, fellowship, and connection with our BUC family. Let's do it again!

But to make it happen this year, we need your help! Bringing a dish is a great start, but we also need volunteers to help prepare the basics, set up, keep things running during the day, and clean up afterward. Last year, a small handful of us did most of that work, and we need more people to pitch in this time around.

Whether you can help with preparations, volunteer for a shift on Thanksgiving Day, bring a dish, or organize a game or craft, there's a place for you. Please sign up to help make this a gathering we can all enjoy! Everyone is welcome!

Ready to help? Sign up through our SignUpGenius link, or see Valerie Phillips in-person after Sunday service in Hodas Hall.

Questions? Contact Valerie Phillips at valerie.phillips@bucmi.org.

BUC Alliance

BUC Alliance programs for 2026-27 are underway! Building on our deep legacy at BUC, our current focus is to explore and learn more about our local community and the larger world through speakers and performers that will expand our horizons.

We meet on the second Tuesday of the month in the Pavilion (just outside the Sanctuary) and then hear our speakers either there or in the Sanctuary.

Daytime programs begin at 12:00 pm and we bring our own lunch to enjoy together, with coffee, tea, and desserts provided. At 1:00 pm, our presenters share themselves

and their topics with us. There will always be time for discussion and Q&A. Evening programs begin at 7:00 pm and may include an afterglow with coffee, tea, and snacks.

Dues are $10 per person for the year to help with expenses for the meetings. Dues are payable by cash or check at the first meeting you attend.

2026-27 PROGRAMS

Tuesday, November 10 at 12:00 pm in the Pavilion
"The Elections are Over…Now What?"
with Charles Thomas Jr.

Charles is Founder and President of "When You Vote I Win," which works to inform citizens about the importance of voting in a democracy, with a focus on youth, seniors, and persons who are registered but do not vote. The program will feature the short documentary "Selma Sisters March On." The film shows ordinary citizens doing extraordinary things—a message that inspires us in 2026.

Tuesday, December 1 at 12:00 pm
Annual Holiday Luncheon at Iroquois Club

Don't miss this fabulous once-a-year experience! Invitations have been mailed and will also be available at church on Sundays. **November 20 is the deadline for reservations.** See more info under Upcoming Events later in this newsletter.

Tuesday, February 9 at 12:00 pm in the Pavilion
Classic Michigan Food and Drinks: The Stories Behind the Brands

Jon Miles and Gail Offen will explore the history behind food brands such as Faygo, Jif, Sanders, Kellogg's, Vernors, Better Made, and many more. Their books will be on sale also.

Tuesday, March 9 at 7:00 pm in the Sanctuary (EVENING)

"A Refugee Family's Journey to America"
with Mary Samal

Through a personal family story, the presenter recounts her family's escape from Czechoslovakia following WWII. Her father, who had been imprisoned in German camps for his anti-Nazi activities, feared prosecution by the newly established Communist regime. He fled to West Germany and later to France, where the family reunited in refugee camps. They immigrated to the United States in 1951 and settled in Cleveland, where they built new lives while adapting to the challenges and opportunities of becoming Americans. This program offers a compelling perspective on resilience, immigration, and history.

Mary Hrabik Samal is a political scientist who holds a master's degree from Fordham University and a PhD from Penn State. She has taught at the University of Western Ontario and Oakland University. Until recently, Samal served as the book review and associate editor of *Kosmas: Czechoslovak and Central European Journal*. Samal's writings on East European politics and cultures, particularly on her native Czechoslovakia, have appeared on both sides of the Atlantic.

Tuesday, April 13 at 12:00 pm in the Pavilion

"Marvelous Mulches"
with Lillian Dean

Natural mulches can be used throughout the home landscape to build the soil food web, reduce yard maintenance, support healthy plants, and enhance habitats for pollinating insects. Lillian Dean, an environmental planner, gardening educator, and advanced master composter, will present practical tips for turning yard waste into yard riches.

BUC Family Holiday Giving

The Holidays Are Coming! The Holidays Are Coming!

For decades BUC has been making the holidays brighter for dozens of families at Walt Whitman Elementary School. Our Family Holiday Giving program matches families with sponsors for the holidays. The families submit wish lists and the sponsors decide which gifts they will provide. (It is NOT necessary to provide every item on the list.) It warms the heart to know that children are joyfully opening the gifts we provide. And the thank-you notes we receive remind us that their parents appreciate it, too!

You can select a family to sponsor on three Sundays in November—the 15th, 22nd, and the 29th (Thanksgiving weekend). We will have a table in the Pavilion (outside the Sanctuary and Hodas Hall) where you can select your family and get more information. If you can't make it to church, you can contact Jane ONeil at janeaoneil@gmail.com or Kym Worth at kymlworth@gmail.com for help selecting a family.

An enormous "thank you!" to all those who helped make Bake Off a success! Whether you baked, bid high, bought baked goods, crafted a soup or two, or volunteered to make Bake Off run smoothly, we appreciate you. Bake Off brought in almost **$1,700**. Not as much as we'd hoped, but many congregants were out of town that weekend—peak leaf-peeping season, you know. We hope to have it in early November in 2027, so put it on your mental calendars today. Start thinking about what amazing baked good you could bake to earn a spot in the Celebrity Baker Live Auction. Will it go as high as Merry Hoffmeyer's beautiful plum cake or Judy Gessi's gorgeous pecan pie? And if it doesn't make the Celebrity Baker selection, just think about how high it will go in the Silent Auction!

Big shout-outs to our Bake Off royalty! Their crowns were earned over many years of helping make Bake Off a success. Congratulations to Queen **Barb Schandavel**! This is most likely no surprise to those who know Barb. She had two entries in the Celebrity Baker Live Auction, and she signed up to be a lead volunteer in the kitchen, a job she knows like the back of her hand. And when she heard more help was needed, she asked, "What else can I do?" So since she offered, she was asked to work the Celebrity Baker

table intake. And for all these reasons, Barb Schandavel was crowned Queen of Bake Off.

Another congratulations goes to King **Chris Haines**! Chris has led the dining room volunteer team for years. To say Bake Off leadership depends on him would be an understatement. He is the master of the extension cord craziness that is Bake Off in Hodas Hall. He knows the flow of the dining room and can make it hum smoothly. And for these reasons, Chris was crowned King of Bake Off. Congratulations to both Barb and Chris! Display those crowns and sashes with pride and happy memories of your many years of Bake Off. Thank you!

Congratulations also go to our Blue Ribbon winners! Barb Schandavel won the taste competition and shared the Best Appearance title with one of our youth, Mathis Howell. Well done, you two! Wear your blue ribbons with pride to subsequent Bake Offs.

For everyone who was able to make it to Bake Off, we hope you had a wonderful time, and we hope you'll put it on your calendars for next fall. We always need help, so look for sign-ups right after the start of the church year. And if you can't help, please come and bid high… or have a blast! And thank you all again!

--Tanya Nordhaus
(photos by Keith Ensroth)

Native Garden Stewards

The Birds and the Bees: Native Plants Help the World Go Round

Strong, beautiful, and hardworking, native plants are ecological powerhouses! They provide food and shelter for pollinators and support biodiversity of all kinds. Their deep roots help water soak into the soil rather than run off into our basements and stormwater systems. Those same roots help store carbon in the soil, where it belongs, instead of releasing it into the air we breathe. Native plants also have

natural relationships with the insects that depend on them, often reducing the need for pesticides. And they do all of this while being wonderfully beautiful!

According to the National Park Service, "'introduced plant species'* contribute almost nothing to the food web. Much of the exotic greenery we see in our residential areas provides as much nutrition as concrete or asphalt. The most visible example: replacement of native plants with 40 million acres of turf nationwide has led to a significant amount of habitat loss over the last couple centuries of our history."

The NPS also reminds us that small birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and fish depend on insects for a significant portion of their diet. And those insects depend on native plants for their food and survival. It's an interconnected web of life—and **WE are all part of it!** Supporting that web is essential to the health of our ecosystems and, ultimately, to our own well-being.

Native plants have been part of BUC for nearly 20 years, thanks to the dedication of many volunteers. On **Sunday, November 1,** some of those volunteers will host a seed-sharing event where you can pick up seeds and get tips on starting them over the winter so they'll be ready for spring planting.

Interested in helping carry on BUC's native plant tradition? Add your name to the **Native Garden Stewards list**! No committee meetings required. You'll simply receive occasional emails about opportunities to enjoy the sunshine, spend time with fellow BUCers, and help our native gardens thrive.

We'd love to have you join us. Hope to see you out there!

**"Introduced plant species" refers to plants brought to this continent from other parts of the world. Because they did not evolve alongside the insects native to this region, they generally support fewer of our local insects and contribute less to the local food web than native plants.*

UUs for Justice in Palestine

What's in a name? UUJME is now UUJP. Around the world, countries ruled by colonial powers are asking allies to change the language to reflect their struggles. To that effect, UUs for Justice in the Middle East is now UUs for Justice in Palestine. The Middle East is a colonial construct and doesn't reflect the role of Palestinian people. Those of us old enough to remember the Indo-China War might remember the struggle over the shape of a table for the peace talks. Eventually it became a four-sided table to include the Viet Cong. That was an anti-colonial struggle and including all the combatants was a major victory. So, UUJME is now UUJP.

Adult RE Forum: Introduction to Just War Theory. Join us on Sunday, November 8 at 12:00 pm for "Introduction to Just War Theory" with Dr. Alexander Riegel, an Adult Religious Education opportunity sponsored by BUC UUJP. See full details under Upcoming Events later in this newsletter.

Peter Beinart's speaking tour in Michigan. Peter Beinart, one of the most influential voices on Palestine, spoke at multiple locations prior to the election to educate and encourage young people to vote. A number of BUC members took the opportunity to hear him in person rather than just on his YouTube and Substack channels. One of the takeaways for me (Sarah Redmond) was his explanation of why many Americans choose to look away from the genocide and apartheid in Gaza and Palestine. Israel is a colonial construct of England and other western powers. Why does that matter to Americans? For us, with our history of genocide of the indigenious population and the enslavement of Africans, which has never been reconciled, we find it easy to not see what Israel is doing to the Palestinians.

Book discussion: Sunday January 10 at 12:00 noon in the Large Conference Room. Join UUJP at our second-Sunday conversation group (now meeting at 12:00 noon) to read and discussing the groundbreaking book *Against Our Better Judgement: The Hidden History of How the U.S. Was Used to Create Israel*. Author Alison Weir traveled to Palestine and Israel as an independent journalist to research how the U.S. became so tied to Israel economically, military and politically. It's a short read and heavily footnoted for those looking to dig deeper.

For more information about BUC UUJP and to join our email list, contact Sarah Redmond at sarah.redmond2007@gmail.com.

Small Group Ministry is a wonderful way to get to know others in our congregation, and to get to know yourself more deeply. Small groups offer a chance to deepen and broaden your spiritual exploration and be enriched by what others share from their own experience and journeys. They're places to build meaningful connections, share the highs and lows of life, strengthen our congregation, and explore our faith together. Read more about BUC's Small Group Ministry program here.

For those who are interested, we are exploring the possibility of offering a community-wide small group experience in a drop-in format, with no long-term commitment required. These monthly gatherings would be a chance to meet new people and try out the small group experience in a relaxed and welcoming setting.

A typical gathering might begin with a shared meal (potluck or pizza) followed by a gathering in the Sanctuary for a brief introduction to the evening's theme. We would then break into smaller groups for conversation and reflection using our BUC small group session plan and theme for that month. Over time, these gatherings could also become a place where new ongoing small groups grow naturally out of the connections people make.

We would likely debut this monthly offering in January, after the holidays and around the midpoint of our congregational year, but first we'd like to gauge interest and hear from you. Would you be interested in participating? If so, **please fill out our survey**! Feel free to email Director of Congregational Life Sara Constantakis at sara.constantakis@bucmi.org with any questions or feedback.

Upcoming Events

If you are interested in starting or increasing the number of native species in your yard, you can find a variety of nurseries that specialize in natives, many of which will ship plants to your home. But it is more economical—and very satisfying—to grow your own with native seeds from other local gardeners. We are making it easy for you with the second of our two fall Native Plant Seed Sharings, happening **Sunday, November 1 in Hodas Hall.**

Participation is easy—whether you have any seeds to share or not. If you already have a population of native plants, collect the ripe seeds and keep them in a cool, dry location away from direct light. To prepare for sharing, place a portion of seed in an envelope or other dry container and label. The label should, at a minimum, include the native plant's name (both common and scientific, if you know it). It can also include any or all of these:

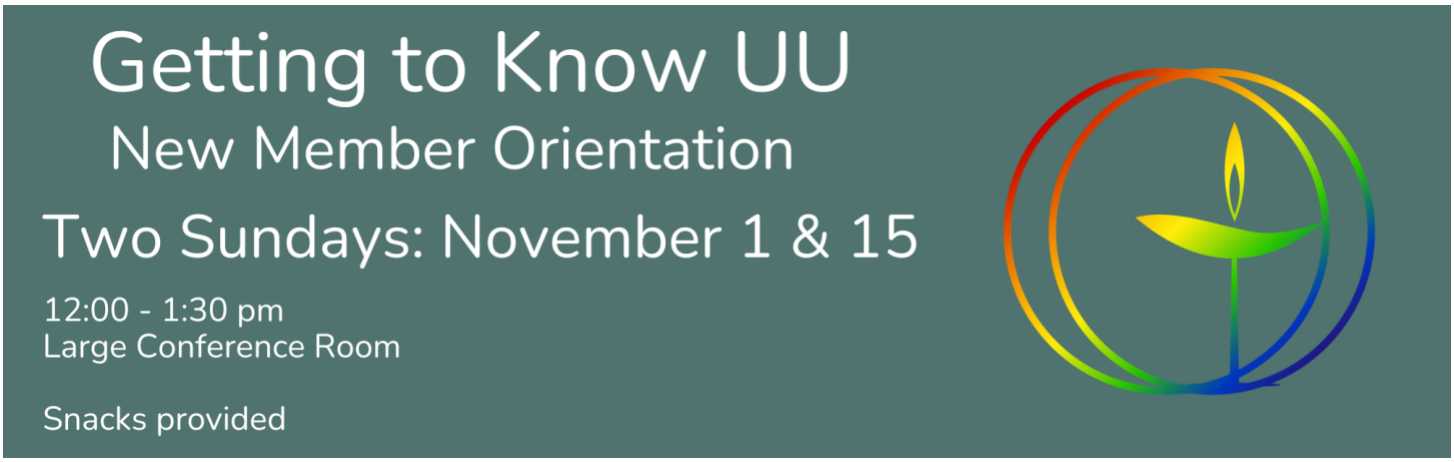
- native plant type: annual, biennial, perennial
- preferred light conditions: sun, part sun, shade
- preferred soil type: clay, loam, sand
- soil conditions: wet to dry
- height
- bloom period
- recommended uses, such as rain garden, pollinator garden, edging, boulevard planting

- any other relevant information that will increase the chances of growing success

Drop off your labeled seeds at the table in Hodas Hall before service, and after service, anyone can pick up seeds at the table (no need to have contributed any). Let's support a healthy ecosystem and make the world more beautiful!

Email questions to Kimery Campbell at kaceybirder@wowway.com.

Join us in Hodas Hall on **Sunday, November 1** during coffee hour for our monthly all-ages community birthday celebration! If your birthday is in November, you're invited to come forward for special recognition. There will be cupcakes!



Thinking about becoming a member of BUC, or just wondering what Unitarian Universalism is all about? Join us for our next two-session new member orientation, Getting to Know Unitarian Universalism (GTKUU).

Happening **Sunday, November 1 and Sunday, November 15 at 12:00 noon in the Large Conference Room**, GTKUU is a step along the path to membership at

BUC. Sessions will be led by Dr. Alex Riegel and Director of Congregational Life Sara Constantakis and are a chance to learn more about Unitarian Universalism and BUC, ask questions, and connect with others who are exploring membership. Snacks will be provided, and a Zoom option is available.

Already a BUC member? We'd love to have you join us, too! Come meet some folks who are considering making BUC their spiritual home and help give them a warm welcome.

RSVP to sara.constantakis@bucmi.org, or just drop by!

RSVPs are now open for the next BUC Sharing Dinner on Saturday, November 14. These cozy, potluck-style gatherings are held in the homes of our congregants on the second Saturday of each month. Participants and hosts sign up and are placed into small groups, creating a wonderful mix of familiar faces and new connections. Once your group is formed, you'll coordinate together to plan the evening and share the meal. Sharing dinners are a relaxed space to come together for good food and to truly get to know one another. It's a simple, joyful way to build friendships and nurture the spirit of beloved community.

New this season, we're suggesting that for the months of November, January, and February, dinner start times are set earlier so that everyone can enjoy the evening while it's still light outside. Many of our participants aren't comfortable driving after dark and a few have had to miss dinners for that reason. We're hoping this small adjustment will make it easier for everyone to participate.

If you would like to participate in the next dinner on Saturday, November 14, email coordinator David Sabbagh at dsabbagh7@gmail.com and let him know if you'd like to be a guest or host a group (if there are more hosts than needed, hosts are chosen at random). **Please RSVP by Friday, November 6** so that David may make the group assignments a week ahead of the dinner.

Adult Religious Education

Forum: Introduction to Just War Theory
with Dr. Alexander Riegel
sponsored by BUC UUs for Justice in Palestine

Sunday, November 8
12:00 pm
Sanctuary + Zoom

Join Dr. Riegel on **Sunday, November 8 at 12:00 pm** in the Sanctuary and on Zoom for "Introduction to Just War Theory," an Adult Religious Education opportunity sponsored by BUC UUs for Justice in Palestine.

The principle criteria regarding the morality (or lack thereof) of war is called Just War Theory (JWT), which originates with St. Augustine in the 5th century. Though war is abhorrent, the truth is that wars have ceaselessly been fought throughout human history. Consequently, even peace-loving people have been confronted with the question of their participation in war. JWT is intended as the moral criteria that helps one make this moral determination under such conditions. Simply stated, JWT helps answer the question, is fighting a war ever moral?

Dr. Riegel will introduce us to the basics of JWT, discuss JWT and the nation state, and articulate the challenges to JWT in the age of terrorism. There will also be time for Q&A. Hope to see you there!

Join the BUC Alliance for their next fall program on **Tuesday, November 10 at 12:00 noon** when Charles Thomas Jr., Founder and President of "When You Vote I Win," will present "The Elections Are Over… Now What?" When You Vote I Win works to inform citizens about the importance of voting in a democracy, with a focus on youth, seniors, and persons who are registered but do not vote.

The program on November 10 will feature the short documentary "Selma Sisters March On." The film shows ordinary citizens doing extraordinary things—a message that inspires us in 2026.

12:00 noon in the Pavilion
Bring your own lunch (coffee, tea, and dessert provided)

12:45-1:30 pm in the Sanctuary
Presentation

Questions? Email Lillian Dean at LFDean2@gmail.com

Alliance Annual Holiday Luncheon

Tuesday, December 1, 12:00 noon (Iroquois Club)

The BUC Alliance cordially invites you to their annual holiday luncheon on Tuesday, December 1 at 12:00 noon at the Iroquois Club. Tickets include choice of entree, warm rolls with honey butter, the Iroquois Club house salad, and coffee/tea/soft drinks. Donations will be collected for Communities United for Children (CUFC), a 501(c)(3) organization supporting BUC's longtime partner, Walt Whitman Elementary School in Pontiac.

Friday, November 20 is the deadline for reservations. Contact Kaye Rittinger at (248) 310-8768 or kayebill@rittinger.net. Invitations with entrée choices and prices have been mailed and will also be available at church on Sundays. Hope to see you there!

Join us **Friday, November 13 from 6:00-8:00 pm** in Purple Door for the next gathering of the One Table, Many Players Game Group—an all-ages meetup of fun, laughter, and connection. With rotating themes like board games, card games, puzzles, and pen-and-paper classics, there's always something new to play and great people to play with! Whether you're a seasoned strategist or just looking for a lighthearted way to connect, there's always a place for you at the table.

Contact: Shannon Snideman (shannon.snideman@bucmi.org)

Looking for a place to get crafty and connect with others in our community? Join us **Friday, November 20 from 6:00-8:00 pm** in Green Door for the next gathering of of the Craft and Chat group—a relaxed, all-skills-welcome group where we gather to make art, swap ideas, share stories, and laugh together. Whether you have a project in hand or simply want to soak up inspiration, you're warmly welcome.

Contact: Valerie Phillips (valerie.phillips@bucmi.org)

MAMA's Coffeehouse

a monthly acoustic music concert series

Saturday, November 21, 7:30 pm
Co-bill:

Joe Jencks & Deidre McCalla

Admission:
$20 regular
$18 student/senior
No advance sales; cash or check at door only

Income from MAMA's Coffeehouse (after operating expenses) benefits BUC

Joe Jencks is a 25-year veteran of the international folk circuit, an award-winning songwriter, and celebrated vocalist based in Chicago, IL. Merging conservatory training with his Irish roots and working-class upbringing, Joe delivers engaged musical narratives filled with heart, soul, groove, and grit. Joe is noted for his unique merging of musical beauty, social consciousness, and spiritual exploration. Blending well-crafted instrumentals and vivid songwriting, Joe Jencks serves it all up with a lyric baritone voice that has the edgy richness of a sea-salt caramel.

Deidre McCalla doesn't merely take the stage; she owns it. Her songs embody hope and celebration, struggle, loss, and longing—sometimes all at once. A Black woman, mother, lesbian, and feminist, Deidre McCalla has long stood at the forefront of acoustic singer-songwriters reshaping expectations of how Black folk do folk. Deidre's songwriting carries an unyieldingly honest perspective expressed with a lyric touch that relentlessly celebrates the power and diversity of the human spirit. Deidre McCalla sings of the politics and passions that fuel our lives.

Have you ever looked up at the night sky and wondered what you were actually looking at? Or why certain stars and constellations have carried stories, meanings, and significance for thousands of years?

Using Stellarium, we'll take another virtual tour of the night sky on **November 22 from 12:00-1:00 pm** in Purple Door!

One of the fascinating features of this program is the ability to explore different sky cultures, revealing the many ways people around the world have looked at the same stars, seen different patterns, given them different names, and woven them into stories that reflect their own histories and understandings of the world.

As we wrap up our exploration of Indigenous Traditions in RE, we'll take a closer look at some of these celestial traditions, including the ways Indigenous Peoples have observed, interpreted, and passed down knowledge of the night sky through generations of storytelling. It's another opportunity to appreciate how the natural world connects us to culture, history, and one another.

We'll also pick up a few tricks for becoming better sky-watchers, from using the stars to help us navigate and mark the passage of time to knowing where to look for different celestial objects and what to watch for throughout the year!

Want to explore on your own? Everyone is encouraged to download Stellarium onto their smartphones or tablets and bring their devices along. We'll spend a little time learning how to use the app for personal exploration of the night sky. Having the app isn't required to participate, though—it's just a bonus!

Come curious, bring your questions, and prepare to see the universe from a different perspective!

BUCers at the Theatre

Join BUCers at the Theatre for another season at the Detroit Repertory Theatre, a union stage guided by the belief that the sense of unity is stronger than the forces that divide us. Since 1957, the DRT's mission has been to produce the finest professional theatre while democratizing the arts and fighting, by example, the disturbing level of racism that still exists.

Tickets $21 general seating (discounted for BUC group; see RSVP info below); $35 at door

1:00 pm - DRT lobby, art gallery, and café/cocktail bar open, with vegan options available
2:00 pm - curtain opens promptly. There is adjacent, lighted, enclosed parking with attendant.

Sunday, December 6: *When We Were Young and Unafraid* by Sarah Treem. In the 1970s, before *Roe v. Wade*, before the Violence Against Women Act, Agnes has turned her quiet bed-and-breakfast into one of the few spots where victims of domestic violence can seek refuge. As the drums of a feminist revolution grow louder, Agnes is forced to confront her presumptions about the women she's trying to help.

BUC dates:

Sunday, February 21: *Purpose* by Brandon Jacobs-Jenkins
Sunday, April 4: *Rodeo Clown* by Will Street (World Premiere)
Sunday, May 23: *Seven Guitars* by August Wilson

Attend any or all of the shows. Sign up anytime before each date or for all at once via email or text to Maryl Kacir Huntington: marylk@live.com / (313) 407-4377. Pay by Venmo (@marylynn.huntington) or by cash/check at the show. Ride together in carpool after Sunday service, or meet up at the Detroit Repertory Theatre (13103 Woodrow Wilson, Detroit, MI 48238).