

The Latitudinarian

Unitarian Universalist Church of the Brazos Valley, College Station, TX

October 2020 Vol LIX Issue X

All Ages Worship and Religious Education Sundays at 10:00 a.m.

Rev. Christian
Schmidt
Minister

Emotional Intelligence

October 4
"UU The Vote"

Rev. Christian Schmidt

(We'll utilize some resources from UU The Vote as part of our worship service) In these midst of global pandemic, rising authoritarianism, and uprising, lives hang in the balance and the future of democracy is on the line. In response, Unitarian Universalists are answering the call of our faith, building powerful partnerships to mobilize our communities to #VoteLove and #DefeatHate in the 2020 elections. Join UUA President Susan Frederick-Gray, the UU the Vote team, and a lineup of powerful, prophetic UU voices as we explore the intersections of faith, justice, and democracy in this collective virtual service.

October 11
"What's Next?"

Rev. Christian Schmidt

How do we move forward together, knowing that we are a diverse group of people with all sorts of opinions? There's no magic, but there is the power of mission and vision, and a shared dream of what our future can hold.

October 18

Rev. Erin Walter

Join us for guest preacher the Rev. Erin Walter, who will lead us in words and music for an hour exploring justice-making.

October 25
"Welcoming All Souls"

Rev. Christian Schmidt

In coming days, we will celebrate a very unusual Halloween, and remember those we have lost this year. In this pandemic era, we continue to adjust how we honor traditions and those who helped make us who we are.

Learn about membership!

Join Rev. Christian at 7 p.m. Oct. 15 for an informal gathering to learn about what membership means in our church. If you want to become a member, if you aren't sure, or if you just want to learn more, come join us! Zoom information on the calendar at brazos-uu.org.



WHO'S WHO AT THE UU

Visit www.Brazos-UU.org to find out Who is Who at the UU or email admin@Brazos-UU.org for specific contacts.

For pastoral care, contact Minister@Brazos-UU.org

Visit Brazos-UU.org/calendar for our interactive calendar.

"Latitudinarian: One who is broad and liberal in standards of religious belief"

In the interim by Rev. Christian Schmidt



"Without vision, the people perish." Proverbs

These ancient words still ring true. Without vision, we will perish. Without a clear idea of both who we are and what we are doing as a congregation, we are at best a social club, and eventually nothing. A church is only as strong as the shared reasons it has for gathering. One way that we hold that close is by articulating it in mission and vision statements. Mission statements talk about what we do, and vision statements talk about who we are (or at least who we want to be!).

About a decade ago, when I was an active member here (that is, before I left to attend seminary) and on the board of trustees, our congregation undertook a mission and vision process over the course of most of a year, culminating in these statements:

UUCBV Mission

With Open Hearts, Open Arms, and Open Minds,
we seek to make meaning, make connections, and make a difference.

Vision

Members and friends of the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Brazos Valley know and value ourselves and are valued throughout the Brazos Valley for:

- † Our love, warmth, and compassion, celebrating life's joys and offering comfort for its sorrows;
- † Our radically inclusive hospitality, offering hope and affirmation for all people; and
- † Our inquiring faith explored and our respect for many paths and sources of religious inspiration.
- † In this spirit we, as a community of faith, seek to:
- † Make Meaning as an ever-deepening spiritual community engaging with all we find sacred;
- † Make Connections within our congregation, across generations, and out to the wider community, across differences of all kinds; and
- † Make a Difference in empowering every person, young and old, to serve others in daily acts great and small, to sustain the world and make it whole.

I share these with you to remind you of them, or to introduce them to you for the first time if you haven't seen them previously! This year, we will engage these statements, talk about how we have lived them out, are living them out, and might live them out in the future, including as we prepare to move to a new physical location and into a new era of ministry. We will also talk about whether we need to update and adjust these statements. Mostly, though, I hope we have the opportunity to be together (albeit virtually), to talk about what matters, and to recommit to the shared purpose and values of this great congregation.

Rev. Christian

Thank You UUCBV,

This Sunday will be my last one as our Artist in Residence and I want to thank you for 3 wonderful years at the helm of your musical ship. Unfortunately, the demands of teaching in the pandemic have stretched me beyond the point of being able to serve the church in this capacity right now. I want you all to know that I have grown as a result of my work for the UUCBV and I am grateful for the opportunity to have been a part of our music ministry. I plan to continue to contribute to the music program when I am able to and look forward to playing music again with all of the wonderful musicians at our church. Being a religious professional means being at church every Sunday but never going to church. It will be nice to attend a service again from the side of the congregation and my family will be glad to have Saturdays back for sure. I look forward to seeing you online until I can see you in person again.

Love and light,
Joe

Love Will Guide Us by Allison Faber



Sometimes change leaves us with dread. Other times it rejuvenates our spirits. Both feelings associated with change stem from uncertainty of knowing what is coming next. Although big changes are coming to our church and Religious Education, I hope that we embrace these changes as a refreshing and exciting challenge.

First, I want to make a note that I am writing this month's column before our RE Organizational Meeting. So, plans may or may not go out the window. Along with the uncertainty of change comes the need of flexibility to adapt to the future.

When our southern region staff held a start-up session with congregants earlier in late August, one of their questions struck me. What would it mean to our community if our church disappeared? For me, RE is one area that our community absolutely needs. What should RE provide? It should offer open exploration of faiths and spiritual development for all stages of life. It should be a place that offers support to, and celebrates, our LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC community members. It should be a genuine space where we can admit that we do not always have the answers and that is just fine. We excel in some of these areas and in others we need to "Walk the Walk." RE provides a service and space to our community that is not offered by any other religious or spiritual organization in Bryan/College Station.

When I think of the potential that Religious Education has for our church and community, I get really excited and incredibly overwhelmed by possibility. During the course of the month, I have thought about offering RE in the afternoon/evening to make it easier for parents to login, starting up a youth-level program on world religions, and bringing the Our Whole Lives to our young people. For adults, it would be absolutely wonderful to have community-building opportunities among younger adults and to have offerings for spiritual development for our elders. As you can probably tell, my mind is a busy place! I recently spoke with Dena Imlay about possibilities for RE outreach including the development of a children's theater program and a Montessori co-op preschool once our new building is built. This type of outreach could help both children and their grownups. All of these programs would enhance our community both inside and outside of our congregation. Let me leave you with all of these larger dreams and goals for now. I hope by the time of our organizational meeting, we have a list overflowing with possibilities for the future.

For RE in October, we will explore the love of giving and start the Love Will Guide Us program. This Tapestry of Faith curriculum explores the UU Six Sources. Plus, who doesn't need a little love to guide us these days?

October 4

Giving as an Act of Love: Rainbow Fish has a lot and shares, She-Who-Is-Alone has a little and shares; What can The Rainbow Fish and The Legend of the Bluebonnet tell us about giving to our communities and each other?

October 11

Love is Like a Seed: For UUs, our sources guide us, just like the night sky. But how did that universe start? We will explore one possible response with The Everything Seed by Carole Martignacco. Come enjoy a guided meditation about the growth within all of us.

October 18

Awesome Love: We will learn about our first source, the sense of wonder and awe we all share. Did life on earth start with a little fish's bubble and a single raindrop from the sky? We will write our own nature stories and think about our place in the universe.

October 25

We Love to Discover: We will learn about our fifth source—reason and the results of scientific method. What's a scientific fact? Who was Charles Darwin? What are dinosaur bones doing in New Jersey? How we can use reason and science to strengthen our UU faith?

President's Column by Gaye Webb

Your Opportunity to Shape our Future

Since the last issue of our monthly newsletter, your Board of Trustees and other members and visitors of UUCBV attended a Start-up Session on August 29 with our Interim Minister. Approximately two dozen of us participated in dialogue around planning our goals and priorities during this interim ministry. I reported the outcome of this session in my September blog on our website – *So What's This Interim Ministry All About*.

At first read, you, like me, might have been overwhelmed about the list of items related to the work of the congregation to prepare for a settled ministry. However, as I take a deeper look, I see that the questions of interim ministry, the tasks of an interim minister, and our congregation's goals and priorities are all interrelated. So, as we work on one, we are working on several at the same time. When we break the work down into small, manageable tasks, we will make progress and complete our goals.

That's not to say that we don't have our work cut out for us. We need all of you to be engaged in this work that will prepare us for a successful ministry with a called minister – someone who hears the call to serve us and someone with whom we hear the call to lead us; someone with whom we will enter into a covenant of shared ministry. It might take us two – or maybe three years -- to get to the point when we (the congregation and one of our ministerial candidates) hear the call to serve one another. But, no doubt, we will get there by working together.

To create a foundation for a successful shared ministry, we must first "discern what it means to be a church by reaffirming or re-creating our covenant, vision, and mission," our first congregation goal for this year. We will begin this work soon – hopefully by the end of October. This will lay the foundation for successful completion of the other goals and tasks of interim ministry.

Of course, the other goal that we will continue to work on simultaneously is our building project. We have a great deal to share with you about this and again need your input before we move forward.

Please join us at a Town Hall meeting on **October 4 at noon** to learn more about the Board's plans for these two goals and to provide your ideas and feedback. To paraphrase the words of scientist Margaret Mead, never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed [congregation members] can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

Take this opportunity to shape our future. Mark your calendars.

Blessings,
Gaye Webb, President

(the Zoom link to the Town Hall meeting is on our website church calendar)

How to Get the Word Out

We're a busy and active congregation with a lot happening. Have you ever wanted to get the word out about an event but are unsure how to do so? It's easy. Email Nancy at admin@brazos-uu.org. You may also contact Nancy if you are not receiving weekly and/or monthly news or if you wish to be removed from our email lists.

The deadline for inclusion in the eCast, and the Happenings insert is **Wednesday at 5:00 pm.**, no exceptions. The deadline for Latitudinarian submissions is the **20th of each month at 5:00 pm.** All submissions must be ready for publication. The church calendar includes these deadlines for your convenience.

Committee on Ministry John Ivy, Joyce Langenegger, Molly Ward, and the Rev. Christian Schmidt

Virtual Open House on Civic Engagement.

Come join us for a conversation on Civic Engagement with Josh Wilkinson. Josh, a member of the congregation, spoke to us on this topic at a recent Sunday worship service. This is your chance to ask follow up questions and discuss your ideas on civic engagement. We hope to see you on **Friday, October 9, 5:30–6:30 p.m.** for informal, stimulating conversation among members and friends.

The CoM is for everyone.

The Committee on Ministry (CoM) is designed to track the heartbeat of ministry within the congregation—how the members take care of themselves and each other, how the lay ministerial leadership serves the congregation, and how the minister serves the congregation. It seeks to understand, assess, support, and advocate for robust ministry throughout the context of congregational life. It is our intent to serve everyone in our UUCBV congregation and all aspects of our ministry.

CoM is for everyone, and we are here to listen. Now that we are unable to meet in person, it is especially important to make the effort to remain in contact. Are you getting the information about happenings that you need? Do you experience difficulty getting connected to our virtual Sunday worship services? Do you have some unmet need but are uncertain whom to ask?

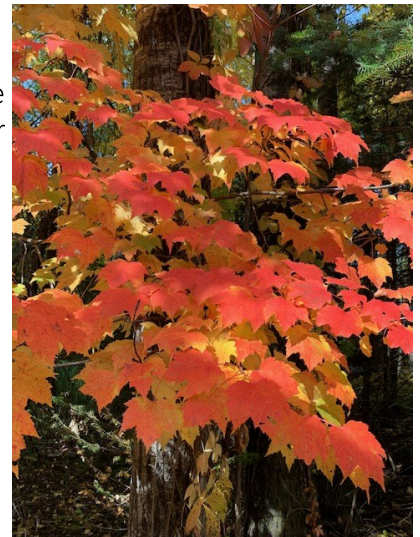
If you wish to discuss a concern; convey thanks, a compliment, or a question; or provide feedback, and you don't know whom to contact or where to start, or you just wish to speak with a member of CoM, shoot us an email at C-O-M@brazos-uu.org. Please provide us with a contact phone number and a few good times to speak. A member of CoM will call you.

News from the UUWF By Karen Bachman and Nancy Granovsky, Program Co-chairs



UUWF plans to meet on October 18th at noon via zoom. Visit our church calendar for the link.

With greetings to all from northern Minnesota where the colors of fall are magnificent and remind us of the power and beauty of nature.



“A dedication to the deceased



Day of the Dead (Dia De Los Muertos) is a two day holiday that reunites the living and dead. Families create ofrendas (Offerings) to honor their departed family members that have passed. These altars are decorated with bright yellow marigold flowers, photos of the departed, and the favorite foods and drinks of the one being honored. The offerings are believed to encourage visits from the land of the dead as the departed souls hear their prayers, smell their foods and join in the celebrations!

Day of the Dead is a rare holiday for celebrating death and life. It is unlike any holiday where mourning is exchanged for celebration,”

<https://dayofthedead.holiday/>

Photos provided by Nancy Granovsky

Sacred Space News

by Kathy Wheeler, SST Chair

Hi all,

The SST recommended and the BOT approved the contractor Keyes & Walsh to build our new church. We were blessed to have excellent contractors from which to choose.

I have talked to Briana Strickland (our civil engineer) and Ronnie Keyes (our contractor) Wednesday Sept 16, 2020. Their take is to have us prioritize our cuts following our **Town Hall Oct 4, 2020** and give them time to study the list. Then both firms (Pact Design & Keyes & Walsh) will participate in a (second) Town Hall to present another Value Engineering (VE) plan (with price savings) based on the prioritized cuts we supply them. Pact Design is willing to participate in this Town Hall, Keyes and Walsh are to be invited. The two firms are both consistent in feeling this is the best path forward. I suggest we cooperate with our experts.

I believe the SST can plan a meeting within a few days following the Oct 4 Town Hall to go over the results of the survey and produce a prioritized list of cuts based on the survey from the Town Hall. The results can then be sent out to the Congregation and our two participating firms in preparation for, we hope, final approval of the finished VE. We should be ready for some substantial cuts in order to be successful.

We cannot spend all we have in our Fidelity account. We will have additional expenses, some dedicated funds, and some unforeseeable expenses. Brian Gibbs put our budget for the contractors as \$1.7 million. If that goal had been met, we would have had a decent cushion. Our lowest initial bid was around \$3.1 million. From there we have been undergoing VE to look for savings. Why the discrepancy? Concrete and building material costs have skyrocketed during Covid. Suddenly buyers are buying houses at low interest rates that need remodeling (using up building materials when some suppliers have had layoffs and closures due to Covid.). The economy has gone crazy. Were we overly zealous in our desire for a nice Church? Perhaps. The cost per sq ft of the building (originally \$250/sq ft) has increased substantially since we started. The building costs are not forecast to go down much in the near future.

We of the SST would like to build smartly with an eye towards the future. If we cut expenses in areas that can be finished later; if the Congregation will pitch in with their time and talents; if we pull together, we can have a facility that will grow with our Congregation.

UUCBV Members, watch for your copy of mailed &/ or emailed surveys forms with explanations for the Oct 4, 2020 Town Hall.

Kathy Wheeler, Chair of the SST of the UUCBV

Do you like to sing?

Do you play an instrument?

Guitar?
Ukulele?
Woodwind?
Strings?
Piano?
Recorder?

If you do, we would LOVE to add you to our Sunday Worship Service musical repertoire.

Please contact, Pam Johnson,
prljohanson@yahoo.com

**AND
KEEP
ON
SINGING!**

Worship Committee is seeking new members to assist in preparing worship services

- Are you a good speaker?
- Do you have technical skills?
- Do you have a creative mind?
- Do you like to put on productions?
- Do you like to meet new people such as other ministers?
- Do you want to add something new to the worship services?
- Do you like to organize different people to produce a perfect production?

If you are interested, please contact Pam Johnson
prljohanson@yahoo.com

Ministry for Social Justice and the Earth by Pam Johnson



Even though we have not been meeting face to face due to the COVID-19 social distancing restrictions, MSJE has been very active and productive.

We will resume our usual MSJE meeting times the second Sunday of each month at **12N**. Our next meeting will be on **Sunday, Oct. 11th**.

This past month, with the help of Dena and Richard Imlay and the UU-The-Vote Team, we sent 250 postcards to encourage early voting. Thank you everyone who participated.

Future plans include a collection for Hope's Locker of much needed underwear for the children listed as homeless in the BISD.

Other areas that we may continue working include TXUJMJ, UU-THE-VOTE, Split the Plate and the Gibbons Creek Coal-Powered Plant Sale and Reopening. However, we will need more people to become involved if we want to continue all of the good work that MSJE has done. Hopefully, we will see you at our next meeting, **Sunday, Oct. 11th at 12N**.



Empty Bowl

15th Annual Brazos Valley Empty Bowls will be a little different this year because of COVID-19. But due to the overwhelming need in our community we are carrying on to support the Brazos Valley Food Bank and our neighbors!

With NO in-studio painting U-Paint It is sending you home with all you need to paint for a purpose! For \$30 you get an Empty Bowls Pottery To-Go Kit (bowl, 5 colors, brushes and instructions). Order your kit, pick up at the studio, paint at home and then bring it back for glazing and firing. When it is finished we'll call you for pick up...and YOU keep the bowl!

\$15 of every Empty Bowls Pottery To-Go Kit will be donated to the Brazos Valley Food Bank. Have a group (scout troop, church group, office, book group) or maybe your family that wants to create for a cause? Let us build a pottery to-go kit for your group! Bowls and group kits are limited so call 979-695-1500 or e-mail to reserve yours.

Studio Pick Up/Drop Off Hours Monday - Friday Noon-5pm Saturday Noon-3pm The empty bowl serves as a symbol of all the empty bowls in our community and around the world.



Smile you are on Amazon Smile!

We are listed as a charitable organization for Amazon Smile. The UUCBV will receive 0.5% of your purchases in donations from Amazon Smile. If you shop Amazon you can sign up for Amazon Smile and select a charitable organization for your purchases to support. <https://amzn.to/2GTVHAp>

Questions? Contact Deb Wilson.

Board Report by Alice Scott, Board Secretary

At its Board meeting in September, the Board of Trustees approved a Corporate Resolution for Fidelity Investments and selected Keys and Walsh Construction as the contractor with whom we will continue negotiations for construction of the new church building. In addition, the Board began planning for the Board retreat scheduled for September 19 and the Town Hall meeting which is now scheduled for October 4. The highlights of these two events include the congregation's goals for this interim ministry as identified at the Start-Up session with the UUA-Southern Region staff on August 29 and an update on the building construction project and the church's operating budget.