

The Latitudinarian

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

April 2021 Vol LX Issue V

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

April 4

"New Things Are Coming"

Rev. Christian Schmidt

It's Easter, and Spring, and so many new things are coming in our world. The vaccines are slowly making their way to everyone, and that will mean changes, not back to the old normal, but to a new normal that allows us more freedom than we've had this last year. At some point, we'll return to in-person activities in our congregation, and soon after that we'll be in a beautiful new building. So many things to look forward to, but most of them not yet here. This is a big part of the Easter story: looking for things that are not yet, but that we faith will soon be.

April 11

"Paying Attention"

Rev. Aaron Stockwell

The first source of Unitarian Universalism had always fascinated me and perplexed me. How do we create the source that says our experiences of the mystery and wonder matter? How do we go deeper?

The Rev. Aaron Stockwell served as the developmental minister of UUCBV from 2015-2018. He currently serves as the senior minister of the First Parish in Framingham. He lives in Framingham with his fiancée, Lizzie, and their dog, Nox.

April 18

"Eighth Principle"

Rev. Christian Schmidt

Several years ago, some UUs proposed we add an eighth principle to the UUA's guiding documents. This principle would state explicitly our commitment to anti-racist principles. We'll talk about why this matters, and why our congregation might consider endorsing the proposal.

April 25

"Earth Day"

Rev. Christian Schmidt

Our church has done so much learning and work on climate change, our environment, and what we can do to make a difference. We'll celebrate the beauty of nature and talk about how we can keep working to make a difference.

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.

Smile you are on **amazon smile**
You shop. Amazon gives.

We are listed as a charitable organization for Amazon Smile. The UUCBV will receive 0.5% of your purchases in donations from AmazonSmile. If you shop Amazon you can sign up for Amazon Smile and select a charitable organization for your purchases to support.

Questions? Contact Deb Wilson.

<https://amzn.to/2GTVHAp>



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

From the Minister by Rev. Christian Schmidt



Easter is one of our favorite times of year in my house. We like to have the egg hunt for the kids, people over, have a big meal. This year, as we keep saying over and over and over, will be different.

We've been working with the other families on our street to have a safe, socially-distanced and masked, egg hunt in our yards. We will have some people over, but just my wife's parents, who have already received their Covid-19 vaccinations.

But still, I'm feeling some of the Easter spirit. As Darbi Lockridge lifted up in a recent RE session, this time of year is full of festivals and holidays celebrating the return of the sun, the blooming and blossoming of flowers, the growth of plants, and the feeling that life is just springing up everywhere.

Easter, the holiday in the Christian tradition, has a somewhat more complicated take, but it does include that sense of life bursting forth once again. It's complicated since it involves the death of Jesus first, but even in that we can learn lessons. Jesus stood up for people, and against an empire that dehumanized them. In many ways and with various levels of commitment, we're called to do the same thing: to promote the flourishing of life and to work against oppression and dehumanization.

Whatever holidays you celebrate in this time of year, I hope you feel a sense of life springing forth all around you and in your own bodies. Go outside, enjoy the warmer weather and all the great things about spring.

In faith,
Rev. Christian

All Ages Religious Education by Pam Johnson



"It Takes a UU Village to Raise a UU Child"

We have had a great start for our March and April theme - "Respect for Others' Beliefs." This has been a great time to learn about other religions. Thanks to our many RE volunteers, and Chalice Lighters!

All Ages RE is for the young and old every Sunday, at 10AM. All Ages RE is set up to be child (and adult) friendly with "Wonder Questions." This way, children (and adults) can feel comfortable asking questions and discussing different topics. RE is not for children only. Adults enjoy and learn much from All Ages RE.



Examples of Wonder Questions

- "I wonder who would do that?"
- "I wonder what could happen next?"
- "I wonder where the seed went?"
- "I wonder when the plastic will decay?"
- "I wonder why we should recycle?"
- "I wonder if there is a God?"
- "I wonder how plants grow?"

Brazos UU ADULT RE - Several people have asked for an adult version of the All Ages RE classes. So ... we hope to make this wish come true with adult religious education coming soon. Please complete the Doodle Poll you will soon receive to let us know the best time to have Brazos UU Adult RE.

If you or someone you know would like to present an RE class, please let us know.

Our "Respect for Others' Beliefs" Schedule (past & future):

March 7	Rev. Christian	Shinto, aka kami-no-michi, a religion originating in Japan.
March 14	Ivy	Meet the Mormons.
March 21	Darbi	Ostara and the Living Tradition of the Spring Equinox.
March 28	Pam -	Does Lent Always Mean No Chocolate?
April 4	Rev. Christian	Recreating Our Pandemic World: Celebrating Easter This Year.
April 11	Dhruvaa Mukherjee	Hinduism: The Goddesses of India.
April 18	Molly	Buddhism.
April 25	Gaye	Our Favorite Things About Unitarian Universalism.
May 2	Joe Daigle	Atheism/Agnosticism/Gnosticism - What Do These Words Mean?
May 9	?	(The Islam Religion) (Judiasm)

Please note that the **Sunday All Ages RE at 10 AM** is not recorded in order to protect the privacy of our children and any discussions that may occur. We hope to record Adult RE in the future for people who are unable to attend so that they may watch at a different time.

See You At All Ages Religious Education, Every Sunday at 10:00 on Zoom!
Go to brazos-uu.org and click on the blue oval tab.

President's Column by Gaye Webb



In my last article, I reported that members of the Board are working on several topics in an effort to determine our budgetary needs for our next fiscal year (beginning June 1):

- Exploring the best time for a settled ministry search and related compensation and expenses
- Identifying new operating building expenses for a portion of the new fiscal year, such as phone, internet, utilities, property insurance, land and property maintenance, etc.
- Projecting when we will be gathering in-person again and how that date compares to our projected building completion date
- Identifying the requirement for other paid staff

Ministerial Search and Compensation:

At its March meeting, the Board made the decision to go into search for a contract minister with the possibility of the congregation "calling" (voting) the minister to be our settled minister in 1 or 2 years. We shared this decision with you at a Town Hall meeting on March 14 with optimism that we will find someone soon who is a perfect match for our congregation. The good news is that we (both the minister and the congregation) will have an opportunity to work closely together for a year or two before we make a decision to extend our relationship indefinitely with a congregational vote.

At its meeting on March 23, the Board elected the Search Committee – Kathie Appelt, Pam Johnson, Maya Lazarus, Brian Lockridge, and Rob McGeachin. The Board also approved a compensation package, reflecting just over \$56,000 in salary and an estimated \$30,000 for health benefits, professional development, retirement contributions, and moving expenses.

Stay tuned as the Search Committee keeps us all posted on the status of their progress.

Building Expenses:

It's been a few years since we have had any building expenses, other than paying rent, since we sold our property in 2016. The uncertainty around when construction will begin and be completed makes estimating operating costs for a brand-new building a challenge for sure. Other data points will be the extrapolations of our annual property expenses on Welborn and our rent expenses at Hillel.

In-Person Gatherings:

The Board is discussing how best to determine when we can get back to in-person gatherings. Currently, infections and hospitalizations are decreasing but with spring break, we might experience another wave. Vaccinations will also play a role in our decision; however, it will be some time before our children can be vaccinated. Guidelines from the UUA, CDC, and our local health agencies will be instrumental resources. Chances are we will be able to begin worship in person prior to the building being complete. Therefore, the budget would need to include some rental expenses – perhaps just for worship space, while staff continues to work from home.

Other Paid Staff:

For the majority of this fiscal year, two of our staff positions have been vacant – Director of Religious Education and Artist in Residence. We have been blessed with many volunteers coordinating, planning, and teaching our all-ages religious education. Virtual services have allowed us to use music videos for our worship services. Are either of these approaches, both or none, sustainable during the upcoming fiscal year, especially when we are back together? If not, what options do we have and what are the related expenses?

This year, we began paying a contractor for technical support for our website, virtual services and meetings, and social media. Should this be a staff position? At what percent of time and at what compensation?

As the fiduciary agents of the congregation, the Board must take the time to analyze and discern these topics to present to you a reasonable and realistic budget at our annual congregational meeting on May 23. The "realistic" part is related to the sum of your financial commitments for the fiscal year (starting June 1). By April 8, please submit your form online here or mail a completed and signed paper form to the church mailing address. If you need a printed form, contact the church office (admin@brazos-uu.org).

In lieu of group gatherings as a component of this year's Stewardship Drive, we hope you will take a few minutes to share your story on our UUCBV Storyboard about how Unitarian Universalism and Brazos UU have impacted your life. Our stories are a wonderful way to share this faith community with ourselves and with others who might discover us. Let's get to know each other better through our stories.

Blessings and peace,
Gaye

Springtime is Stewardship Drive Time



This is the time of the year when trees begin to bud, landscapes need care more often, wildflowers are in bloom, and the days are getting longer.

The same is metaphorically true for our congregation: What new ideas (bud) are forming? How we need to take care of our landscape (infrastructure) to eliminate weeds and to enhance growth? How can we help our flowers (members) bloom? And what can we do to ensure our congregation lives longer?

Basically, the answers to these – and other – questions can only be provided by you through your financial commitments to our operating budget during our Stewardship Drive time. Without monetary contributions we could not exist. To create a budget that will support new ideas, take care of our landscape, help our members, and ensure our existence, the Board is asking you to reflect on the value, the impact, this congregation has on your lives and others with whom you interact. Let your financial commitment be a gift of appreciation and legacy to yourself, current members, and others who make this congregation "live."

Please submit your pledge (financial commitment) by **April 8** – by completing this form on our website or completing and mailing the printed copy (email the church office – admin@brazos-uu.org) to request a form if you did not receive it in the mail).

Since we aren't holding planned events (Zoom or in-person) during this annual stewardship drive, we invite you to join us in sharing your UU story, your power, and your visions on our virtual UUCBV storyboard. If you have a photo of a memorable moment, or a symbol of what Unitarian Universalism means to you, or even your own picture, add it to the board, too. We are eager to see how this congregation has impacted your life. We hope to display the board in our new building to give a glimpse of why we all come together to celebrate being UUs.

Committee on Ministry

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



Happy Hour!

CoM invites you to our monthly virtual Happy Hour! If you have not attended before, we have missed you! Make plans to join us **Thursday, April 8, 5:30–6:30 p.m.** for informal conversation among members and friends. Share how you, as a UU, celebrate Easter, or, what you're hoping for in our next ministry. CoM in the Age of COVID.

It's been a year since we've seen each other face-to-face as we continue our work remotely. Our worship services, our board meetings, and our committee meetings have all been virtual. Many of us are suffering from Zoom fatigue, and we want to return to the fellowship we remember when we met in-person.

This is a unique, trying time and it is testing the best of us. Are you feeling disconnected? Do you have a concern or unmet need and you don't know whom to contact? Do you need to speak with someone or have a question? CoM is here for you to contact. Send us an email at C-O-M@brazos-uu.org. 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 Katie Womack and Nancy Granovsky, Program Chair



UUWF Meeting Features Guest Speaker, Catherine Onyemelukwe, on **April 18th**

Deeper Multi-cultural Understanding and Racial, Social, and Economic Justice

UUWF will host a special speaker via Zoom, following our regular church service and coffee on Sunday, April 18th. We hope to attract a wide audience from our church, other UU churches, and the wider Bryan-College Station community in international issues and multi-cultural understanding.

Catherine Onyemelukwe is our featured guest speaker. Catherine has had a long and interesting career as an educator, Peace Corps Volunteer, author, blogger, speaker and active UU member. She lived in Nigeria for over twenty years before returning to the United States. Interest in the U.S. was spiked initially in the 1960's when she became the first U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer to marry a host country national. She has published two interesting books, *Nigeria Re-visited: My Life and Loves Abroad*, and *Breaking Kola: An Inside View of African Customs*. She will share insights from her life and from the latest book she is reading: *Me and White Supremacy, Combat Racism, Change the World, and Become a Good Ancestor* by Layla Saad. We have asked her to comment on the kidnapping of schoolgirls in Nigeria.

To learn more about Catherine, see her website: <http://catherineonyemelukwe.com/>
Mark your calendars and invite others you believe will be interested in her program on the importance of deep multi-cultural understanding and racial, social, and economic justice.

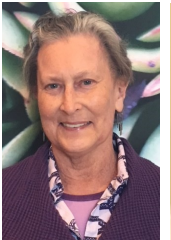
Board Highlights by Alice Scott, Board Secretary



At its meeting on March 9, 2021, the Board voted to enter into a search for a contact minister to begin serving the congregation in August 2021, with an option to renew for a second year and the option to call the individual as our settled minister via congregational vote in the spring of 2023. The Board also reviewed and discussed a draft of the new mission and vision statement and will continue the discussion at its **April 13** meeting with plans to present to the congregation for a vote at the annual meeting on **May 23**.

At its March 23 meeting, the Board elected the Search Committee and agreed on a compensation package for the new contract minister.

Ministerial Search Committee by Maya Lazarus and Pam Johnson



The Settled Minister Working Group (Pam Johnson, Maya Lazarus, Kathi Appelt, and Brian Lockridge) were tasked by our board president with recommending whether we should begin a settled minister search this spring for calling in August 2022.

The group decided that now was not an opportune time because of our construction project and financial uncertainties. What would be more feasible? The group went beyond their task and recommended to the Board to search for a contract minister who would agree to a renewable, one-year contract with the possibility of being called to a settled ministry after two years. The Board accepted this recommendation and presented it at an informational Town Hall on March 14th.

Since that time, the Board has approved five church members to represent the congregation on the search committee for a contract minister. (Contract minister is a hired position that will receive a final vote by the Board once a candidate has been recommended and chosen.) The members of the search committee are Rob McGreachin, Kathi Appelt, Brian Lockridge, Pam Johnson, and Maya Lazarus.

The contract minister application will be submitted to the UUA Transitions Office in early April after another Town Hall meeting on March 28th to receive input from our congregation on what they feel is most important to look for in a contract minister. The search committee will keep the congregation up-to-date on the search

process as we go along. Please feel free to contact any of the search committee members with questions or concerns.

Ministry for Social Justice and the Earth by Pam Johnson



New Announcements and New Programs for You!
Please join us at our next MSJE Organizational Meeting
Sunday, **April 11th 12N**. Always the 2nd Sunday of each month, 12N.



I. **The Split the Plate Recipient for April 2021 - June 2021** will be for the BV African American Museum. We want to increase our connections with Bryan organizations with which we work. The Brazos UU supports the mission of the the Brazos Valley African American Museum, which, is to explore, develop, preserve and present the cultural history and heritage of African Americans.

II. **Confronting Our Racism.** The Confronting Our Racism Group (CORG) is a coalition of community organizations started by the Brazos UU. Members of the CORG include:



- Brazos Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Social Justice and the Environment
- Bryan/College Station Library System
- Brazos Valley African American Museum (BVAAM) Curator and Board of Trustees
- Brazos County National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
- Brazos Valley Black Lives Matter (BLM) Group
- Consulting team of specialists in racism and segregation

In an effort to increase our understanding of systemic racism and the ways it impacts individuals and our communities, the CORG will soon invite members of the B/CS community and surrounding areas to sign up for small reading groups of the book, *Stamped, Racism, Antiracism, and You, A Remix* (2020) by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi. We will send those who signed up a Learning Guide and suggest that they get their reading group together to read the book over the summer. We will then invite all small book reading groups to an online panel discussion of the book by community leaders and experts in the field. During the panel discussions, we hope to again break up into randomly assigned smaller groups to continue discussions with facilitators, followed by a question and answer session with the panel.

Race matters in our community and it is time that we have open and truthful conversations about it. We hope to address persistent racial disparities intentionally, explicitly, and comprehensively and to learn from these discussions. The CORG will provide a forum to effectively engage, sustain and deepen interracial dialogue so that, as a community, we can make changes that will benefit all.

III. Texas UU Justice Ministry News by Jerry Wagnon



TxUUJM is an organization made up of UU congregations across Texas that have come together to influence opinion and legislation on social justice issues inside the state’s borders. A big part of that work involves citizen lobbying of the state legislature when it meets every two years for a 140-day main session that is often extended to include one or more shorter special sessions. With a state as populous as Texas, a lot of legislation – some in



accord with our UU Principles and other bills very much at odds with our beliefs – is enacted in a short amount of time.

While we wait to see which bills make it to the floor of the House and Senate, TxUUJM is working alongside some of our partner organizations to be able to respond quickly. You are urged to check out their websites for fast breaking actionable responses:

Reproductive Freedom. Several bills are moving to the floor of the Senate to greatly restrict the right to reproductive health, including safe and legal abortion. We partner with Just Texas on opposing these measures. <https://justtx.org/>

Transgender Rights. This year, it looks like the anti-LGBTQ right is pushing at the top of their agenda a bill to ban transgender children from competing in sports based on their gender identity. For more information, see the Equality Texas legislative website: <https://www.equalitytexas.org/>

Voting Rights, Medicaid Expansion, Criminal Justice Reform (Including the George Floyd Act) and Migration. A major push to suppress voter turnout is underway, aimed especially at denying lower-income and minority persons access to the ballot. This is just one of the areas in which we partner with Texas Impact. In fact, their website is a go-to place for information: <https://texasimpact.org/action-center/>

We will try to keep you informed as the legislative session heats up on ways you can make a difference through the eCast. This will likely include a TxUUJM legislative action day with meetings on Zoom with our local elected state officials in late spring.

IV. The E in MSJE Stands for the Environment!

Brazos UU Lunchtime Environmental Talks Every 2nd Thursday of each month, at 12N - 1 PM,
Take a lunch break! Pre-TALK Conversation 11:30A-12N.

Upcoming Lunchtime Talks On The Environment

•**Thursday, April 8th**

Global 'Weirding' By Professor Alan Pepper, TAMU Ecology and Evolution Biology Expected, But Not-So-Obvious Consequences of Climate Change.

•**Thursday, May 13th**

"The TX Electric Grid: How Can We Prevent Future Catastrophes?" By Prof Alfredo Garcia, Professor, Industrial & Systems Engineering. In this talk we describe the market design features that currently render Texas's electricity market vulnerable to rare events (such as the recent Polar Vortex) with catastrophic consequences. In addition, we survey regulatory design solutions that have been tried and tested in many electricity markets worldwide. Prof. Pepper will explain the basics of global warming and its erratic effects on our climate

V. **BRAZOS VALLEY AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM.** Several members of the Brazos UU showed support for our soon to be new neighbors and attended the virtual BVAAM 20th Annual Virtual Appreciation Banquet on Saturday, March 27, 2021. Our friend, Ebony Peterson, Co-founder of the Black Lives Matter B/CS Organization, was the featured speaker.





V. **Green Tip of the Week.** Maya Lazarus continues her wonderful job of updating the Green Tip of the Week. If you would like to add a Green Tip, contact Maya.



This green chalice is from UU Fellowship of Boca Raton =>



Our New Church– Building Fund Capital Campaign Update by Nancy Granovsky and Rob McGeachin, Building Fund Capital Campaign Co-Chairs



We are incredibly pleased to announce the latest update to the capital campaign designed to augment funds for our new church on East 29th Street in Bryan. As of March 21st, capital campaign commitments received thus far total \$231,900 from 25 households. We expect to meet the goal of \$300,000 since we have not received commitment forms from every member household. It is not too late to submit commitment forms or add to commitments already made. Remember that a commitment form details what you plan to donate by January 31, 2022, or earlier.

We greatly appreciate the work of the entire Capital Campaign Team. We convene regularly to assess progress, make recommendations, and celebrate accomplishments. If you have recommendations or questions, please feel free to contact a team member: Carolyn Clark, John Ivy, Kathy Wheeler, John Faber, Nancy Deer, Leslie Dempsey, Gaye Webb, Pam Johnson, Deb Wilson, Rev. Schmidt, Rob McGeachin and Nancy Granovsky.

If you haven't visited our website recently (brazos-uu.org), please do! You'll see the tab for **Our New Church Home** and instant access to the financial commitments gauge, a location map, property progress blog and progress timeline, Sacred Space Team Report, and Financial Commitment Form as well as an ability to donate directly from the website. Kudos to John Faber and Nancy Deer for working their magical tech support!

We welcome your questions, recommendations, and financial commitments. And if you have not yet sent in your financial commitment form, please join the 25 households whose promises we have already received to share their financial treasure for this largest UUCBV undertaking ever....Our New Church Home!



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.