

# The Latitudinarian

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

December 2020 Vol LIX Issue XII

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

December 6

"Filled with Loving-Kindness"

Rev. Christian Schmidt

It can be easy in difficult times for our worst selves to come out. Instead, let's focus on how we can live up to our highest ideals, and forgive ourselves and others when we fail to do so.

December 13

"Celebrating the Light"

Rev. Christian Schmidt

The Jewish festival of Hannukah is this week, and its story of resistance and faith can help us think about our own times in a new way.

December 20

"Embracing the Dark"

Rev. Christian Schmidt

Solstice is the time when the night is longest. In this time, we take a moment to embrace the gifts that darkness brings to us.

December 24

"Candlelight Service"

Rev. Christian Schmidt

Christmas message -- A special video message to invite our members to experience another UU congregation's Christmas service.

December 27

Congregational Yuletide Celebration

Worship Committee

### 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,  
prljohnson@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  
prljohnson@yahoo.com



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

## From the Minister by Rev. Christian Schmidt



This will be a holiday season unlike any other. It's hard to say much for sure these days, with all the changes we have endured in the past year, and no doubt more to come, but I feel safe in saying that much.

And though I continue to learn more about the power of technology to connect us (I hope you made it to our joint service with our neighbor UUs of the Thoreau Woods congregation last month!), many of the differences in this holiday season will not be for the better. I'm not sure if it's safe for my father to travel to see my family. Our Thanksgiving table was, and our Christmas table will be, smaller than usual this year (though with 6 in our family plus my in-laws, it won't exactly be small!).


Holiday craft fairs and sales will be either canceled or very different. Holiday services for many religious traditions will be either virtual or in tightly-controlled in-person environments. Our own Christmas Eve celebrations for UUCBV will also be very different. I'm currently working with some other UU ministers to do something together, that we might combine our energies into a service that does more than any of our congregations could do alone.

Given all this change, I invite you to take time to give thanks, remember what you do have, and don't be afraid to ask for help or (virtual) company if you need it. All of us, no matter how much we're struggling, have things to be thankful for, and none of us need to pretend that we can do it all alone.

Whatever holidays (or none!) you're celebrating in this season, may they bring you blessings and joy, and may the year 2021 bring wonderful new blessings in all our lives.

In faith,  
Rev. Christian

### Our Mission and Vision

Friends, we are now well into our mission and vision process, in which we will update and affirm the congregation's longtime mission and vision, which you can refresh yourself on here 

In the first step of our process in November, we talked about the past and what the congregation has been at its best. The overwhelming amount of responses fell in two categories: when we have been deeply involved in the larger community, either going out and doing work or inviting people in; and in the ministry we have performed for each other in providing a place for people to feel welcome in a diverse variety of beliefs and to grow spiritually. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this aligns well with much of our mission and vision, and gives us some strong thoughts about where we might be called now and in the future.

This month, at noon on **Dec. 6**, we will gather for the second session: "Who Are We Now?" We will share some highlights from this last year (and what a year it's been!) and what are some of the most pressing issues in our community right now. We will also delve into a few demographic details about our larger community that might inform our discussion. If you can't make the session, we will again do a short survey you can fill out electronically – we will send that out via email the week after Dec. 6.

**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.

Your participation is critical in this work, so please come and tell your friends, too! Thank you!

In faith,  
Rev. Christian, John Ivy, Molly Ward, Joyce Langenegger

## What's New in RE? by Allison Faber



We are nearing the end of the year and entering into a time that is usually spent with family and friends. The holidays may look a little different than usual at your houses. You may not even be physically meeting up with family during the holiday season. Although this is the

unfortunate reality of living in a global pandemic, it is difficult to keep spirits up when we feel more disconnected than ever before. We can never fully replace the warmth of in-person RE, but we have engaged in a few activities that I think have created a digital version of our beloved RE.

In November, our first masked meetup was a ton of fun for all attendees and our participation in the CROP Hunger Walk plans to be another excellent opportunity for outdoor fun. One important aspect of RE is our devotion to realizing our service potential and striving to reach it. In addition to our community-building, RE has also helped our community and world during the latter part of the year. Our Trick or Treat for UNICEF campaign raised enough for 32 immunization doses. We are currently holding a food drive for the Brazos Valley Foodbank and will also contribute to the "Keep Their Bottoms Warm" Hope's Locker clothing drive. Way to go, RE!

As always, we welcome ideas from the congregation about RE. The coming new year provides a great time to try out new ideas! Do you have something you are passionate about? Why not tell us about it at RE. Do you have a special spiritual practice that could benefit others? Share it with us! We love having new faces and activities to enrich our spiritual lives and educational processes!

As we move into December, we will be engaging in holiday activities and learning until the end of 2020. From wrapping paper craft projects to writing reflections of our year and hopes for 2021, December RE is full of fun and community building. We hope you join us each week at 10 AM!

**Smile you are on Amazon Smile!**  
We are listed as a charitable organization for Amazon Smile. The UUWV 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>

## RE Curriculum

### December 6

**Share in the fun of giving:** Pam and Maya lead RE participants through a wrapping paper craft activity. Please make sure we have your address in order to receive an RE craft package!

### December 13

**The Festival of Lights:** Tamara Shipman will teach us about the Jewish celebration of Hanukkah.

### December 20

**The Longest Night:** We will explore the celebrations of both Yule and the Winter Solstice honoring our earth-based religious sources.

### December 27

**Reflecting on the Year, What We Hope to Learn in the New Year:** Let's send 2020 on its way with a reflection exercise and talk about what we hope 2021 will bring.

## News from the UUWF



By Karen Bachman and Nancy Granovsky, Program Co-chairs

UUWF Holiday Cookie Recipe Exchange and Reflections on 2020

**Sunday, December 20, 2020 at 12:00 noon via Zoom**

2020 hasn't been a normal year and this Holiday Season will be very different. While we can't have a real cookie exchange, we CAN have a Holiday Cookie Recipe Exchange on this day before the Winter Solstice. Please share a favorite holiday cookie recipe and submit it in advance to Nancy Granovsky (nancygranovsky@hotmail.com) - recipes will be compiled into a collection you can print out. At the meeting, prepare to share your recipe and its history/meaning to you/your family at holiday time.

We will conclude the December meeting by sharing our Reflections on 2020. Prepare to briefly share how life changed this year - what you struggled with - how you changed/adjusted - where you are in this journey right now.

Thanks,  
Nancy G

## President's Column by Gaye Webb

Happy Holiday season to all.

Our congregation has created and received an early "holiday gift" - reaching a milestone in our building construction project. The third Sunday of this month -- November 15, 2020 -- goes down in our congregational history books as the day that 38 members (of the 40 casting votes) of the UU Church of Brazos Valley took a bold step into our future in Bryan by approving the construction of our new building!

Ninety-five percent of those casting a vote at the meeting or by proxy approved the following motion. This percentage is much higher than two-thirds of the voting members present at the meeting as required by our bylaws.

Approval to begin construction at a cost not to exceed \$2,000,000 and upon assurance that the congregation's attorney has reviewed the contract and has issued an opinion that our risk is no greater than if we were to purchase a performance and payment bond.

If you weren't able to attend the meeting, you can access the information that was shared by viewing the slides here. <https://bit.ly/32VGJak>

### The slide deck includes:

- A brief summary of the bid process over the summer
- Results of the feedback we received from the congregation on a list of items that we might exclude or modify from the original plans in an attempt to reduce the cost from \$3.1M to \$2M or less. The architect and contractor is considering your feedback as they finalize the plans.
- A summary of our financial position as it relates to the building construction
- An explanation of the "performance and payment bond" portion of the motion

### Next steps as we see them now

Fundraising effort with a goal of \$300,000 and a great **BIG SHOUTOUT OF GRATITUDE to Kathi and Ken Appelt for offering a \$100,000 matching pledge.** If you can't access the slide deck, or have questions after you review the slide deck, please send me an email at [president@brazos-uu.org](mailto:president@brazos-uu.org) and I'll follow up with you to share the information and/or answer your questions.

Rob McGeachin and Nancy Granovsky are the co-chairs of our fundraising effort to supplement our building fund. They will provide more information soon. In the meantime, you can submit a building pledge by completing this on-line form

<https://bit.ly/32R915R> or make a building pledge donation on our website here.

<https://www.brazos-uu.org/product-page/building-fund>

Another exciting event is on the horizon -- a groundbreaking event at the property early next year. If you would like to help plan the event, please contact me at [president@brazos-uu.org](mailto:president@brazos-uu.org).

I express my deepest gratitude to each and every member of our congregation for your commitment to this church. Each of you is a blessing to our congregation and the community around us. The actions you have taken will ensure our legacy for years to come.

Blessings,  
Gaye Webb, President

## Worship Committee

Maya Lazarus & Pam Johnson, Co-Chairs

The Worship Committee continues to work with Rev. Christian to produce the All Ages Worship Service every Sunday and we are always looking for new participants to contribute their ideas and talents.

We now have a Worship Assistant and Greeter Scheduler - Eleanor Ford - Thank you very much, Eleanor.

We would love to hear from you about what we are doing well, poorly and how to improve. Several people have commented that they like the announcements at the beginning and end of the service and the discussion period after the service. What do you think? Please contact us individually or complete the Sunday Service Feedback Form with the good, bad and the ugly. <https://www.brazos-uu.org/sunday-service-feedback-form>

### New to the Brazos UU: Sunday, December 27, 2020: All Congregational Yuletide Service.

We hope to make this an annual event. This will be an all congregational service with members playing, singing and reading poems, readings, etc. that refer to the Yule and Yuletide. So, put on your creativity caps and let us know what part you will play. This should be a very exciting service seeing co-members and family members display the yuletide creativity.

Thank you,  
Pam & Maya, Co-chairs &  
The Worship Committee Members: John Faber, Molly Ward, Brian Lockridge, Erin Wilkinson, Josh Wilkinson, John Ivy, Gaye Webb, Ivy Chatwin, Jerry Wagon, Maya Lazarus, Katie Womack, Eleanor Ford.

# Ministry for Social Justice and the Earth by Pam Johnson

The MSJE continues to make an impact on our community. See below our most recent and ongoing projects that you can join.



## I. Annual Hope's Locker "Keep Their Bottoms Warm" Fundraiser through DEC. 2020.

For those who don't know, Hopes Locker distributes gently used clothing, new school supplies, and non-perishable food to the children of the BISD that are deemed homeless. They often receive clothing donations from the community but seem to always run out of new underwear and socks since these items cannot be re-used. Adult Large & X-Large sizes are especially needed. That is why we are asking for donations. Take advantage of online Black Friday sales. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, we will not be having a formal collection but ask that you order your items on-line and have them sent directly to: Project Hope, 1901 E Villa Maria Bryan TX 77802, Attn: Tara Dupper. You are also welcome to drop off items - contact Pam Johnson - prljohnson@yahoo.com.

Attention Boys & Men: Hope's Locker is in particular need of gently used boys and men clothing. Men, please consider buying yourself a new Spring wardrobe- you all need new clothes -and donate your gently used outfits to Hope's Locker.

## II. Family Promise (FP) Update:



FP is a shelter for homeless children and their families. Most families stay 2-3 months as they work their way towards a new home and better employment. Over the past 3-4 years, we have committed to providing warm dinners, daily food, and an overnight host on a rotating quarterly schedule.

FP is now open for business, after having its overnight program closed due to Covid-19 restrictions. They are now ready to accept families to social distance, but not for children to attend school online without parental supervision. Any and all ideas are welcomed as they could get the call for a family in need any day now. The standby rotation schedule lists Brazos UU - **Dec. 13th - Dec. 20th, 2020** as they work towards hosting a family again.

## III. Crop Hunger Walk:



Thanks to Alice Scott for organizing the Annual Crop Hunger Walk. Several church members enjoyed a beautiful day and joined RE in the walk at Veteran's Stadium in CS. The Brazos UU did exceptionally well in its final monetary collection.

## IV. Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry (TXUUJM):



The TX Legislative Session Begins **January 12, 2021**. And TXUUJM Is Ready. You Are Welcome To Participate With Trips To The Capitol.

TXUUJM Advisory Council will be meeting in January and then more frequently in February 2021 to discuss legislative issues and actions. TXUUJM represents 30 UU congregations and over 1500 people.



### Top issues for TXUUJM

1. Racial Justice
2. Environmental Justice
3. Healthcare Access
4. Economic Justice
5. Voting Rights

Any other issues that go against UU Values will be watched carefully and acted upon, if necessary. Two issues included in last year's list, LGBTQ Rights and Reproductive Rights, were not voted on the list this year but are issues that are very important to watch.

## MSJE Continued

### V. The E in MSJE Stands for Environment:

MSJE is looking for 2-3 people to lead the environmental aspects of MSJE.

Potential things a Brazos UU Environment Group could do includes:

1. Educate yourself and write blogs for the Brazos UU website
2. Manage and/or contribute to The Green Tip of the Week.
3. Develop environmentally related RE programs
4. Organize local political action plans for Brazos UU members
5. Develop a Sunday service concentrating on the environment
6. Join Citizen's Climate Lobby (CCL)
7. Help the Brazos UU become an Environmental Green Sanctuary <https://www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary/> becoming
8. Develop a community garden at our new site - The BV Food Bank would be able to help with this.
9. Establish a recycling program for our new church
10. Get the Brazos UU involved in local, national and international movements
11. Anything fun you want to do dealing with the environment

**WHO'S WHO AT THE UU**  
 Visit [www.Brazos-UU.org](http://www.Brazos-UU.org) to find out Who is Who at the UU or email [admin@Brazos-UU.org](mailto:admin@Brazos-UU.org) for specific contacts.  
 For pastoral care, contact [Minister@Brazos-UU.org](mailto:Minister@Brazos-UU.org)  
 Visit [Brazos-UU.org/calendar](http://Brazos-UU.org/calendar) for our interactive calendar.



### VI. Confronting Our Racism: A Community Conversation Proposal

Select members of the MSJE are working with the Wayne Sadberry, Curator of the Brazos Valley African American Museum (BVAAM), and their Board of Trustees to develop a community-wide reading and film program that will open up conversations about racism

in our community. Both parties are extremely excited about the program, so Stay Tuned!

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

#### Happy Hour – How will you celebrate the holidays?

CoM invites you to join in a virtual Happy Hour to share how you plan to celebrate the holidays during this time of COVID pandemic concerns. Please join us with the beverage and snack of your choice on Thursday, **December 10, 5:30–6:30 p.m.** for informal conversation among members and friends.

#### Committee on Ministry

The CoM is for everyone. The Committee on Ministry (CoM) is for everyone, and we are here to listen. The 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 is our intent to serve everyone in our UUCBV congregation and all aspects of our ministry.

Now that we are unable to meet in person, it is especially important to make the effort to remain connected with each other. Are you getting the information about happenings that you need? Are you getting too much information? Do you experience difficulty getting connected to and involved in 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](mailto: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.

### Board Report by Alice Scott, Board Secretary

The Board's meeting on November 10th included planning for our November the 15, 2020, congregational meeting which focuses on our building project and associated fundraising effort. We also discussed the next steps in our Mission and Vision covenant and our Goal #2 which is: Identifying a governance structure that will provide flexibility and strengthen relationships between Minister, lay leadership, and members in the context of soulful ministry.