

September 2018

Grace Notes

The Monthly Journal of First Unitarian Universalist Church



Vision

the practice of intentional imagination

From the Minister
Rev. Luke Stevens-Royer



Driving across northern North Dakota this summer with my family, to visit good friends, there was a moment where I really noticed the vastness of the view. "It seems like we can see forever," said our 4-year-old. It seemed like that to me, too.

In the late afternoon sun, in a mix of sun and clouds, I noticed small showers, little pockets of rain falling from seemingly the middle of nowhere – some nearby, some far away.

In some ways, being able to see across homes and fields and stories and lives led my attention away from our car – the devoured piles of picture books, the snacks spilled across the floor from a long day's drive; and in other ways, it reminded me that for someone else the present moment was a rainstorm – and for me, it was a family car ride – and a thousand stories in between and beyond.

At its best, vision invites us to notice the world right around us, but also the world, right now, that does not center on us. It draws our gaze and attention to the moments, the places, the people, that seem far across this landscape of life and love, but are still our kindred, and are experiencing this moment in the world, too, from their own perspective.

It can take a thousand forms – physical, spiritual, metaphorical, scientific, or, more likely, all of that mingled together – to begin to understand vision.

This year we have much we are envisioning. We are, for the first time, using a monthly theme program, *Soul Matters*, that connects us with Unitarian Universalist congregations across the country, using theme-based resources for worship, small groups, and religious education.

We will continue to explore our model of shared ministry, reflecting on best practices for staff and lay leaders to collaborate in ways that are strong, clear, and nourishing.

And we are living deeper into visions that were once a dream, but now are ours to build on.

We are deepening our religious education program by remembering that it takes all of us to nurture spirituality and growth in our children and youth – knowing that having opportunities to interact with generations other than our own is good for us all.

We will continue the work for a more equitable world, naming injustices and the inhumane treatment of immigrants and refugees, and oppressed communities. We will keep making partnerships, reflecting on our own identities, and keep showing up for our neighbors through our work as a Sanctuary church and beyond.

We are beginning conversations about our building and property, listening to our hopes and dreams for where we are to go next – taking the dreams of those before us into unknown horizons.

And all of this, over and over again, comes down to our mission: nurturing spirituality, practicing justice, and living lives of meaning and service.

What we can envision, we can become – if the moments we are in lead us beyond ourselves. And if we travel together.

From the Board

Gail Bishop, President

"When once you have tasted flight, you will forever walk the earth with your eyes turned skyward, for there you have been, and there you will always long to return."
- Leonardo da Vinci

What do I have in common with insects, pterosaurs, birds, and bats? It's flight! These natural aviators' aerial locomotion is inherent, mine powered by the grace of a machine. As a pilot, I am privileged to experience the perspective of our winged companions, feeling the freedom and exhilaration of soaring above the clouds.

This bird's eye view enables me to see interconnections not visible from the ground. Terrain blends into a oneness without boundaries. There are no perceptual differences. Altitude is a natural equalizer. It is quite a visionary view of the world. The sun is always shining above the clouds, and some days I can experience that light when the world below is cast in shadow.



As thrilling as it is from this view, I am reminded of the technical components that got me there: the patterns, rhythms, timing, decision making, and planning that prepared me for this particular journey. I've established a personal limitation in that I never fly solo. I acknowledge that I may feel some turbulence. I view each flight as a foundational experience for the next destination. I trust that the briefing I received was sound, that radar has my back, but that the ultimate responsibility still rests with me.

Every part of a flight has a position, a waypoint, a purpose. For example, when approaching to land, a pilot's view is different depending on the type of plane, but the turn is always the same. The author, pilot, and teacher, W. Scott Olsen, in his book *Prairie Sky* describes it in this way: "There's a grace to the base to final turn, a lesson about hope. At the last moment, everything we hope for is hidden. There's a hard risk to what we do. But at the moment after that, our destination is revealed. Centerline. Flare. Smile."

Flying is a metaphor for life. What else can we reach for beyond the horizon? Is there a more peaceful altitude that makes life's moments smoother, and, if not, are we mindful that we have a choice in how we respond to those moments? Are we open to reaching new destinations? Are we willing to challenge ourselves for the opportunity of self-discovery?

This year your church Board of Directors is focusing on serving with grace, being open to those unexpected moments whether stormy or calm, piloting together from place to place. We have a principled guidance system based on trust, much like air traffic control, to assist our decision making. We have prepared ourselves for a smooth takeoff. Though there may not always be blue skies, we are confident in trusting our abilities to navigate safely in the year ahead.

Cleared to land!

From Age to Age:

Joyce Rood, Director of Religious Education



Fall has always been my favorite season. Mother Nature looks as if she's ready for a night on the town, all dressed up in red, yellow and orange. There's excitement in the air as children head off to school in anticipation of reuniting with friends and exploring new topics of learning. Here in the RE wing, new lessons are ready to be taught, bulletin boards are ready to be filled with kids' creations, and plans are in the making for sending our youth to Boston in August.

This fall religious education will return with twice the gusto, as opportunities for fun, exploration, and spiritual growth for our children will now be available on both Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings.

The beginning of a new school year can bring stress and anxiety for children. As with all new situations, there are many questions: Will I be with my friends? Will I like the subject matter in my new classes? Will I have nice teachers? The children who attended the summer religious education classes learned how their minds and bodies work together

and how they can regulate their anxiety levels with mindful breathing and exercise. Some mindfulness activities will continue to be explored on Walden Hill Wednesdays when children PreK-6th are invited to the Chapel while the adults meet in the Hearth Room from 6:30 – 7:15 p.m. There will be more singing, dancing, and acting than in the Sunday morning religious classes. We will explore the Seven Principles a little more intentionally. There will be arts and crafts nights, along with special nights when we have guests teach their talents and skills to our kiddos.

We will continue to use the *Tapestry of Faith* curricula for the PreK-8th grade classrooms on Sunday mornings with offerings at both 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. The lessons will highlight Unitarian Universalist stories and UU identity. They will "provide children with the spiritual and ethical tools they will need to make choices and take actions reflective of their Unitarian Universalist beliefs and values." The 7th and 8th graders will participate in the *Building Bridges* program where they will expand their knowledge of the major world religions.



The monthly themes will be incorporated into our children and youth faith formation programming at least once a month through the *Soul Matters* network as a churchwide endeavor!



A Vision for Nurturing Our Children and Youth

Derik Robertson, Youth Program Coordinator

What we see in life determines a great deal of who we are. To an untrained eye, a hill covered in verdure is simply green, but to one who can see, there are many different types of vegetation upon the hill both beneficial and noxious. To one who cannot see, a picture is just a picture. A car is just a car. Without knowing what to look for, we are forced to make judgments based on criteria that may or may not be appropriate to the situation. Details, values, and interactions with that part of the world become washed out and shallow. However, once we know what to look for, we can make more informed and valuable judgments about the world around us. This is why we need teachers. After all, our verbs "to teach" and "to show" come from the same old English word: *tæcan*.



We need teachers to show us how to look and what to look for. For this reason the youth this year will spend a lot of time looking. We will look closely at Unitarian Universalist history. We will study the people, places, events, ideas, and movements that shape our religion. Locally, we will see the history of our congregation by looking into the archives and sharing the stories of this congregation from its founding to today. Integral to this work is seeing what the current congregation is showing the youth through their examples. We will be looking at the types of service and justice work that this congregation advocates and do our best to participate in this work. By looking at what the congregation is trying to show the youth, we will learn about the type of Unitarian Universalists this congregation wants us to be.



At the end of the year, the congregation will show the youth, in a profound way, who they are by sending the youth on a pilgrimage to Boston. While in Boston, the youth will spend an afternoon at Walden pond, attend a youth service at the chapel built by Bronson Alcott, tour the UUA headquarters, visit the graves of Emerson, Thoreau, the Alcotts, Channing, and other notable individuals associated with Unitarian Universalist history. We will see social justice in work as we volunteer at a homeless shelter and see our history with visits to historic churches around the city. We will visit the Harvard Divinity school and read some of the excerpts from Emerson's address given there. After a full week seeing what the congregation wants the youth to see, we will come home and show the

congregation what we have learned while in Boston and throughout our year being taught by them. In this way the youth will show the congregation more fully who they are, what they stand for, and let the congregation see a glimpse of the future of Unitarian Universalism.



Congregational Life

Chalice Circles

In Chalice Circles, we look within ourselves and find stories drawn from the wellsprings of our own lives. We bring forth stories of individual victories and defeats, personal fears and disappointments, private insights and concerns. Each person speaks, others listen. Everyone speaks. Everyone is heard.

This small-group ministry is entering its 9th year at First Unitarian Universalist Church. Chalice Circles are led by trained facilitators who have experience with leading this time of deep listening. The circles are made up of 7-10 people, meet at a set time monthly for 2 hours, and offer you a time of deep, contemplative discussion on a variety of topics. 2018-19 facilitators include: Brianna Berg, Melissa Egger, Sara Felts, Joe Lobl, Maggie O'Connell Nolte, Roxanne Schlasner, and Margo Stich.



Learn more about this small group ministry by visiting the registration table in the Hearth Room and Commons on Sundays, September 9, 16, and 23, or call or email Melissa Egger, 282-5209 - congregationlife@uurochmn.org

Quotes

"Being in a Chalice Circle is a wonderful way to connect with other members of the congregation. I appreciate the opportunity to think deeply about a subject and hear other people's ideas, which serves to shape and reshape my own thoughts."

"It's a chance to hear the life experiences of others in ways that are uplifting, focused, and enlightening."

"Being a Chalice Circle Facilitator has been an important part of my spiritual journey, and gifted me with deep thought and listening."

Walden Hill Wednesdays

"Around the table we offer friendship and celebrate life. Our meals offer a divine moment, an opportunity for people to be seduced by grace into a better life, a truer life, and a more human existence."

-Tim Chester, from A Meal with Jesus



Join us as we begin a new opportunity for fellowship, conversation, and togetherness during Walden Hill Wednesdays!

Beginning on September 12, 2018, we will kick off a vibrant new life at First UU that brings us all together to share a fellowship dinner, listen to and participate in contemplative discussions, and attend your meetings, classes, or groups on each Wednesday night of

the month. These evenings will also include programming for our children and youth through our Religious Education and Walden Hill Youth Programs. Childcare for children 6 months-3 years will be available until 7:15 pm.

Four "Wednesday Night Cook Teams" have planned and will serve dinners each Wednesday evening from 5:30-6:30pm. These dinners are open to all singles, couples, families, and children! Free-will donations will be accepted (suggested donation: \$5/ adult, \$3/child, \$15 max/family). All meals will include a vegetarian option.

Come join in this weekly opportunity to get to know fellow members and friends of the church on a more personal level, sharing the pleasures of food and drink, hospitality, conversation, and togetherness.

Upcoming Events

Watch the Weekly eNews for a complete list of events

- Saturday, September 8
4:30-8:00 pm **Fall Kick-Off Picnic**
An end of summer and welcome back picnic at the church.
All are welcome.
- Sunday, September 9
Water Communion & Opening Sunday
Please bring some water to share – from your home or your travels, for our common pitcher, and 7 words to describe it.
9 & 11 am Intergenerational Services
12:30-2:00 pm Religious Education Orientation for parents & teachers
- Wednesday, September 12
5:30-8:30 pm **Walden Hill Wednesdays begins**
An evening of church activity & fellowship
5:30-6:30 pm Dinner in the Commons (free will donation)
6:00-7:15 pm Choir in the Sanctuary
6:30-7:15 pm Fireside Forum in the Hearth Room (childcare available)
6:30-7:15 pm Children's Activities in the Chapel; Homework Help in the Library
6:30-8:00 pm Walden Hill Youth Group
7:15-8:30 pm Various Committees, Classes, or Groups
- Sunday, September 16
9 & 11 am **Religious Education begins**
10 am Religious Education for PreK – 8th grade
Welcome Back Potluck for the entire congregation
- Saturday, September 29
9 am **All Church Property Workday**
All ages gather to brighten up our church, inside and out
- Saturday, October 6
9 am-12 pm **Fall Leadership Forum**
A gathering for leaders and others to consider the vision and goals of the church for the coming year.
- Saturday, November 3
5:30–9:00 pm **Annual Service Auction Party**
A night of food, music, and fun to support the work of the church. A silent auction includes special events, dinners, and groups, and a live auction includes various services, retreats, cabins, and more!

Church Staff

Luke Stevens-Royer	Minister	revluke@uurochmn.org
Joyce Rood	Director of Religious Education	dre@uurochmn.org
Melissa Egger	Coordinator of Congregational Life	congregationlife@uurochmn.org
Jody Tharp	Congregational Co-Administrator	office@uurochmn.org
Connie Schuelka	Congr. Co-Administrator / Co-Dir. of Music	administration@uurochmn.org
Joe Mish	Co-Director of Music	music@uurochmn.org
Derik Robertson	Youth Program Coordinator	youthprogram@uurochmn.org
Chantelle Feddersen	Childcare Coordinator	childcare@uurochmn.org
Tom Rud	Custodian	custodian@uurochmn.org

Throwback Page

History Highlights of First UU

History of Grace Church

by Sue Wheeler

From its founding in 1866 until 1875, our church had 5 ministers, each staying a year or two, and a modest frame chapel with a small but stalwart congregation—devout people who worked to keep the church viable. However, in January 1875 when Rev. George Deere preached his first sermon here, he must have seen great potential in that congregation for spreading the word of Universalism. In two short years that congregation grew by 100 members and built Grace Church (Universalist). It was “the finest building, with the first pipe organ and the largest congregation in the city,” according to church historian Marion Sloan.

From the Rochester Post, February 1876, as the church was being built:

“It is to be built of the handsome limestone to be mined here and trimmed with Mantorville stone. The general style is to be gothic, with an octagonal castellated tower, in which is to be the vestibule. It is intended to be not only the handsomest but the most commodious of all the churches.”



First Unitarian Universalist Church



1727 Walden Lane SW
Rochester, Minnesota 55902
507-282-5209 | uurochmn.org

Sunday Services & Religious Education
9 & 11 a.m.

*Our publication title, **Grace Notes**, harkens back to the name of this congregation in the 1870s, Grace Church, and also refers to a grace note in music, which is an extra flourish to a main piece of music. Each month, we create some space to highlight just a flourish, some extra notes, within the larger life of our church.*