

January 2019

# Grace Notes

The Monthly Journal of First Unitarian Universalist Church

## Possibility

what does it mean to be a  
people of possibility?



**LOVE**  
Your Neighbor<sup>\*</sup>  
\* Your Black, Brown, White,  
Immigrant, Native, Disabled,  
Religiously Different, LGBTQ,  
Fully Human Neighbor



From the Minister  
**Rev. Luke Stevens-Royer**



*Think of the year as a house:  
door flung wide in welcome, threshold swept and waiting,  
Here let the weary come, let the aching come  
let the lost come, let the sorrowing come.  
And may it be that its rooms will fill with ordinary grace  
and light spill from every window to welcome the stranger home.  
- Jan Richardson*

There are many ways to mark the turn of a year.  
I've been struck, recently, about the many ways a year is  
marked throughout our world –  
based upon the moon, or the sun,  
based upon rotations of the earth,  
on various cultural calendars –  
it seems like a new year is always beginning, always ending  
– somewhere, for someone.

More recently, I've begun to appreciate the reminder, the invitation,  
that new beginnings can, and in fact do, happen all the time.

We need every opportunity we can get to begin again.  
In our relationships with loved ones,  
in the chapters of our lives – our work, our families, our life passages -  
in the attunement of our heart  
to grow in either our despair, or our hope  
for a more beautiful world.

Several traditions remind us that the world begins anew each morning –  
with the rising of the sun, so too our souls begin again.

What if we mark each day with such an intention?  
What if, each day,  
it is like a door is flung wide in welcome, a threshold is swept and waiting,  
waiting for how we will spend our day, share our life,  
how we will show up - to each other, and to the world.

Such an intention is to believe in possibility.  
To believe that the life we hope for –  
and perhaps more manageable: the day we hope for – is possible.

If we believe in that, and we want a world where people can wake to the day,  
with their souls free enough, their lives open enough, to believe love and justice are  
possible,  
then it takes us all doing our part to create a world where the possible becomes real.

Perhaps if we take an old song, dust it off, and pay attention,  
we remember we can't go it alone:

*And here's a hand, my trusty friend,  
and give me a hand of thine!  
We'll take a cup of kindness, yet, for auld lang syne.*

Happy New Year,  
Luke

From the Board  
**Rob Harveland**

*The most damaging phrase in the language is  
"We've always done it this way!"*

— Rear Admiral Grace Murray Hopper

Think about that for just a moment. So many things in our world do not get better because we insist on maintaining the status quo. Imagine the possibilities if we were to accept someone trying to do something differently. I've heard many people say, "we tried that before and it didn't work." I believe they think they are helping by passing on their wisdom in hopes of saving time and money.



The problem with their statement is it isn't complete. The statement should be, "we tried that before and it didn't work with the people, technology, and resources that were available at the time." Failure should not be a show stopper; it just means that it didn't work that previous way. If Edison and Ford had stopped trying after one failure, what would the world be like now?

Imagine the possibilities in our church if we stopped saying "we tried it and it won't work." Imagine what we could do if we harnessed the enthusiasm, energy, and talents of our members and let them think of new ways to do something rather than be dismissive when the initial idea comes out.

Imagine what we could do if everyone actively gave to the church. (As Treasurer, I feel obligated to toss in that last comment.)

Please note, I'm a firm believer that time is money, so regardless of your financial situation, you have something to contribute. There's a lot that happens at church because of volunteers. If we didn't have volunteers, we would need to hire someone to do the work. For some, volunteering involves committee work; for others committee work is too much of a commitment given their other obligations. For those people, there are opportunities to volunteer for one-time events throughout the year. Regardless, everyone who volunteers helps build a vibrant church community.

Our building is both our greatest asset and our greatest liability. Earlier this fiscal year, we had a listening session about our building and property. A lot of great ideas came out of that session. As we develop those ideas into strategies and actions in the coming months and years, it is critical that we maintain open minds and focus on the possibilities that arise out of change.

Again, I ask that you imagine the possibilities if we look at new ideas with open minds and offer ideas for removing barriers rather than creating more of them.

# Social Justice Committee: How can you help?

*by Marie Davidiak*

Our Social Justice Council was founded to build and maintain a social justice organization with a distinctly moral voice based on our UU values and principles. Our focus has 5 distinct areas of commitment:

1. **Service:** to meet people's immediate needs through donations and service.
2. **Education:** to understand the what, why, and how of needs in our community, to dialogue and build consensus.
3. **Witness:** to express our convictions publicly by word or deed.
4. **Advocacy:** to work with the legislative process to impact public policy.
5. **Community organization:** to develop coalitions to empower people to participate in decision-making.

Our Council meets once every 2 months. During our meeting, the chairs of the individual task groups report on their groups and we plan for the upcoming work of the council. All of these task groups need more members to effect change in the important work they do. The groups are:

**RACIAL JUSTICE TASK GROUP** works on combating racism in its various forms. Its purpose is to hold local institutions accountable for eliminating institutional racism. This year the group has been working on Sanctuary issues for persons with immigration problems to help with legal and housing issues. This group provides education, service, witness, advocacy, and community organization. Contact person: Phil Wheeler

**PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITIES TASK GROUP** works on educating our community about disabilities, making our church accessible to people with disabilities, and advocating for families of people living with disabilities. Our church was one of the first churches to receive the EQUAL award for making our church accessible to all people. Contact persons: Shelly Maciujec and Lyn Smith

**SIDE WITH LOVE/WELCOMING CONGREGATION** harnesses the power of love to end oppression and biases, welcome and support the LGBTQ community, and raise awareness of economic inequality. It facilitates a timely response when situations call for united UU actions. Contact persons: Patty Trnka and Paulette DeMers

**REFUGEE TASK GROUP** works with Catholic Charities to help refugees and ensure a smooth transition in terms of knowledge of community resources, help learning how to shop, help with language barriers, transportation to appointments, provision of items for household maintenance, tutoring of children, etc. Contact person: Elizabeth Katzmann





The Social Justice Council also partners with established community service organizations to meet immediate needs of community members.

**HAWTHORNE HELPS** provides support that affirms personal dignity, welcomes newcomers to our community, and encourages all students' educational success. Contact person: Sandy MacLaughlin

**COMMUNITY FOOD RESPONSE** provides free meals to adults and children through food donations from various restaurants, cafeterias, and grocery stores. UU members staff this service on the 5th Monday, Wednesday, or Friday of the month. Contact person: Sarah Rothwell

**FAMILY PROMISE** helps homeless and low-income families achieve sustainable independence and hosts families 3 to 4 weeks/year at another site. Contact person: Julie Gilkinson

**SATURDAY NOON MEALS** provide family-style, nutritious meals in a warm, safe atmosphere for persons in need. UU members assist on specific Saturdays through the year. This program's contact person is to be determined.

The Social Justice Council also makes decisions about which social service organizations will receive our financial contributions. Once a month, a recipient is selected for Sunday's Share the Plate offering.

Finally, the Council provides education through the sponsorship of speakers. In October we sponsored the Move To Amend speakers who discussed corporate organizations undermining individuals' rights in elections and due process. In November we sponsored Mel Underbakke to speak at a Walden Hill Wednesday forum regarding the government's strong-arming of individuals without due process. We also invited Kathy Miner to speak of the work that the non-partisan Minnesota Peace Project does to build a more peaceful world through frequent communication and actions with congressional members on foreign policy.

None of these groups could do the important work they do without the countless volunteer hours of many people. Each of these task groups and community service organizations has a real need for volunteers. Consider volunteering for as few or as many hours as you feel you can give. The UU principal of believing in justice, equity, and compassion in human relations, along with respecting our interdependent web of the world, makes this work critically important in these changing times.

Any person is invited to attend our Social Justice Council meeting, usually on the 4th Wednesday of every other month at 7:15 p.m. You will hear reports from each task group and may find an area of interest that you want to join. In addition, people have come to our Council to talk about other areas of social justice that they feel are important. You can speak to the Council about what you wish to pursue and get direction from us going forward.





# W.H.Y. COFFEE HOUSE

**January 18, 2018      6:00-8:00 p.m.**

**First Unitarian Universalist  
Church of Rochester**

**1727 Walden Lane SW  
Rochester, MN 55902**

**Coffee, Tea, Hot Chocolate,  
and Steamers!**

**Baked goods and other  
yummies both sweet and  
savory! Come hungry!**

**Entertainment provided by youth  
and friends.**

**Come and have a blast!**

**This event is a fundraiser to support the Walden  
Hill Youth Group's Boston Pilgrimage.**





# Upcoming Events

Watch the Weekly eNews for a complete list of events



5:30-6:30 pm	Dinner in the Commons ( <i>free will donation</i> )
6:00-7:15 pm	Choir Rehearsal
6:15-7:15 pm	Children's Activities, Childcare in Nursery
6:15-7:15 pm	Walden Hill Youth Group
6:30-7:15 pm	Forum

## Walden Hill Wednesday Forums

- January 2      No Walden Hill Wednesday (New Year's)
- January 9      **FILM: Come Sunday** (rescheduled from an earlier forum)  
(an extended forum: 6:15-8:00pm)  
A Netflix film about Bishop Carlton Pearson, an evangelist who was ostracized by his church by preaching a gospel of inclusion and no hell, and is now working with the UU church in Tulsa, OK.
- January 16      **Project Legacy Forum**  
Join Karen Edmonds, Executive Director of Project Legacy, for a conversation around the organization's work of supporting youth of color ages 17-24 who are refugees, homeless, formerly gang-involved, or recently incarcerated.
- January 23      **Safe Congregations Forum**  
Our Leadership has been in discernment about our policies and practices as they relate to the level of involvement of individuals who have a known sexual offense history. Come for a conversation with our minister, members of the board, and guest speaker Alex Bunger, program manager of Community Corrections in Olmsted County, for a conversation about how our values of inclusion, and safety among our people, can be held with integrity.
- January 30      **Building our Future: Reflecting on our Building**  
Join staff and Board leaders for a listening session about our building - balancing the practical and the dreams of what could be. All are welcome

## Special Events

- January 21      **Martin Luther King Jr. Day**  
Join us for services highlighting justice work in our community and an invitation to get involved, including the MLK march in Rochester on Monday.
- March 16      **Moving Forward Together: Destination Celebration**  
Join us for an all-ages party of music, skits, a communal art project, and refreshments, all in celebration and support of our church.

## Church Staff

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# Throwback Page

## History Highlights of First UU



*Pictured: UUs show up for Rochester's MLK Day March in 2013.*

*"Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that.  
Hatred cannot drive out hate, only love can do that."*

*- Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

## First Unitarian Universalist Church



1727 Walden Lane SW  
Rochester, Minnesota 55902  
507-282-5209 | [uurochmn.org](http://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