

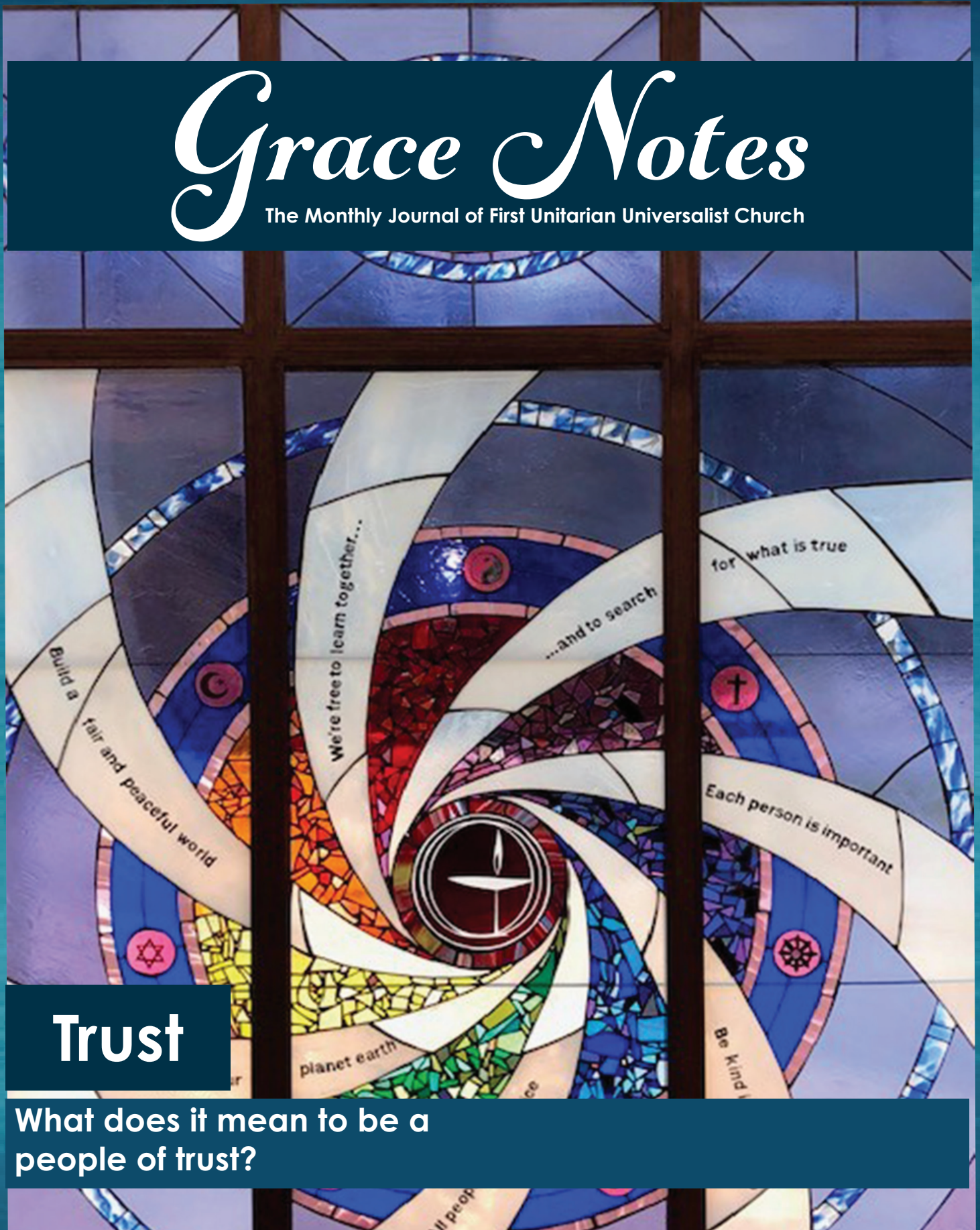
February 2019

Grace Notes

The Monthly Journal of First Unitarian Universalist Church

Trust

What does it mean to be a
people of trust?



From the Minister

Rev. Luke Stevens-Royer



*Whom should I turn to,
if not the one whose darkness is darker than night,
the only one who keeps vigil with no candle, and is not afraid—
the deep one, whose being I trust,
for it breaks through the earth into trees,
and rises, when I bow my head,
faint as a fragrance from the soil.*

- Rainer Maria Rilke

Trust is hard.
What to trust, who to trust, when to trust.

Perhaps it is particularly hard in our pluralistic style of spirituality to trust in something larger than our own sense of self, soul, or ego. In fact, a core teaching in our tradition not too long ago was to *thine own self be true*.

As religious liberals, we have often thrived on skepticism, hesitancy, questioning – which was and is a good balance to messages too often expressed in religious teachings to trust without question, to have faith unwavering, come what may. Trusting unconditionally isn't a virtue, either – it is often used to abuse power.

But when life drops, and grief or pain hits like a ton of bricks,
and the winds of hope or love or anything good is knocked right out of us,
the question still sits there, waiting to be addressed, if one is paying attention at all:
in what, or whom, do we put our trust, when the world of *thine own self* is just too small?

It doesn't have to be God or Spirit.
It doesn't have to be logic or reason.
It doesn't have to be just yourself.
The world is too large and complicated, and life is too hard to go it alone – beloved as you are.

Perhaps it is some parts of each, or some combination or mixture of it all.
Perhaps the best thing we can do is trust until proven otherwise,
in the sun's ability to shine, in a soul's ability to be resilient,
in a heart's ability to change and grow beyond its own selfishness.

To trust that, when we fail, and when we need help –
there will be something, or someone,
like beauty, like flowers, like music, like good friends,
like compassion and kindness from some source we didn't expect,
that will find a way to hold us through this life,
and trust again
that life, and love,
will find a way.

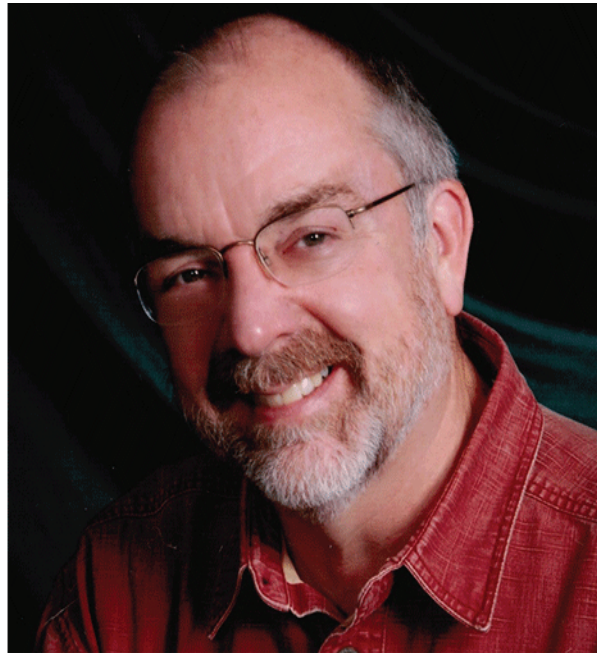
- Luke

From the Board

Dave Siljenberg

Our theme for February is Trust. It is tied very closely to our first principle, “the inherent worth and dignity of every person.” After all, it’s hard to trust people if we don’t appreciate their worth and treat them with dignity. If you are like me, this central pillar of our seven principles is the toughest one to follow. You and I are probably thinking of some of the same people that we’d like to get an exemption for.

Closer to home we may, at times, lack trust in the institutions and people we are active with. This is my first year on First UU’s Board. Given the Board’s role as the ultimate “decider” of a number of questions, it’s vital that the congregation “trusts” the Board. This is why the bylaws require that Board members be elected by the congregation members.



But even with this approval, it’s easy to scratch your head and ask, “Why did they vote that way? Why did they spend money on that?” or, more to the point, “What does the Board do?” During the Ministerial Search Process a common comment from the listening sessions was, “We need to have these sessions all the time, not just when selecting a new Minister.” It’s clear to me, in my first half year, the Board got that message and we are actively obtaining feedback from a number of you. This year we will host listening sessions at various times to obtain comments and ideas from people we haven’t heard from yet.

One topic that requires particular attention is our church building and grounds. There are a number of attributes of our church facilities that are of concern for today and the future. The list includes poor energy efficiency, outdated kitchen, lack of activity space for children, and good access for all abilities, just to name a few. The activity to navigate a direction for this important topic is being spearheaded by Reverend Luke and is called “Building our Future.” The first listening session was in October, and a second session was held in January. Stay tuned for other events. And as always, I hope you feel free to contact me or one of the other Board members with your comments, concerns, and ideas.

This process of discussions, meetings, and ultimate decisions can easily strain that trust thing. People who have a long history with this building and its remodels may be hurt if they perceive other people want to just throw it away and start over. Newcomers may feel longtime members are ignoring shortcomings that are obvious to them. Know that the Board has no preconceived agenda. Whether it’s remodeling, replacing, or something else, it’s all on the table. The overarching guide in this process is that our building and grounds support our mission and vision for the future.

“Trust is the lubrication that makes it possible for organizations to work.”

Warren Bennis – American writer

From the Endowment Committee

Sue Nielson



This church is very important to me, and I want to see the great work done by this congregation continue in the generations to come. Because of this, Jim and I have, in our wills, designated funds to go to this church upon our passing. Several other members of our congregation have done the same. There is a plaque in the Commons with a list of some who have contributed to our Endowment Fund. The future of our church depends on ongoing financial support by its members.

The purpose of an endowment fund is to provide financial stability beyond the annual pledge drive and budget. This fund will help secure, strengthen, and

extend the long-term survival and mission of Unitarian Universalism and our congregation. Gifts and bequests can be in the form of money, property, securities, or other assets. You can give a specific dollar amount or a percentage of your estate, or you can designate a specific item such as real estate. You can make your gift to our congregation or in support of Unitarian Universalism nationally or globally. Your bequest can be unrestricted or given for a specific purpose such as social justice, building maintenance, or a long-term project.



It doesn't matter your age or family situation. You should have an up-to-date will or a trust. If the church is important to you and you would like to help ensure our presence for our children and future generations, we encourage you to include our church in your plans. As religious people who cherish freedom, search for truth, and work for justice and mercy in the world, our church will be our legacy. Think about what the church means to you and how we can continue our work for future generations.

Sue Nielsen
Chair Endowment Committee

Any questions can be directed to the Endowment Committee:
Sue Nielsen, Mary Amundsen, Richard Harrell, Dave Edmonson, Vikki Wolff



The Berlin Mass

Joe Mish

Twelve years ago, we presented a contemplative worship service featuring works by the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt. Pärt, like all successful composers, trusts his own ear and compositional process. The performance of his music also requires trust from both the performers (as they struggle with the difficulty of learning the music initially) and the listeners (as they learn to listen to his tonal landscape).

Pärt has a unique compositional style which he describes as follows:

"Tintinnabulation is an area I sometimes wander into when I am searching for answers - in my life, my music, my work. In my dark hours, I have the certain feeling that everything outside this one thing has no meaning. The complex and many-faceted only confuses me, and I must search for unity. What is it, this one thing, and how do I find my way to it? Traces of this perfect thing appear in many guises - and everything that is unimportant falls away. I have discovered that it is enough when a single note is beautifully played. This one note, or a silent beat, or a moment of silence, comforts me. I work with very few elements - with one voice, two voices. I build with primitive materials - with the triad, with one specific tonality. The three notes of a triad are like bells and that is why I call it tintinnabulation."



Although Pärt's music does not demand virtuosity, as it uses relatively simple melodic and rhythmic elements, it is difficult music to bring off in performance because it requires perfect execution and attention to detail. When we performed his Berlin Mass in March of 2007, it was the most difficult piece I'd ever conducted. On February 17 Connie Schuelka, the choir, and I will be excited and challenged to present this work again. Most of the service will be the Berlin Mass, but there will be several shorter works performed as well. Spiegel im Spiegel, which in German literally can mean both "mirror in the mirror" as well as "mirrors in the mirror," refers to the infinity of images produced by parallel plane mirrors. Für Alina was the first piece composed in Pärt's unique style. Variations for the Healing of Arinushka was used in the Ken Burns documentary, The War.

Arvo Pärt's Berlin Mass includes eight parts: Kyrie, Gloria, two Alleluias, Veni Sancte Spiritus, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei. Rather than translations, here is an interpretation of the meaning of each movement. The Kyrie is about showing mercy, kindness, or compassion to each other as well as ourselves. The Gloria says rejoice and give thanks for the world in which we live. Veni Sancte Spiritus tells of the power of the spirit to do good works in the world. Credo is an expression of faith. Sanctus is an exploration of what we hold to be holy or sacred. The final movement, Agnus Dei, contains the closing line, "dona nobis pacem," or "grant us peace."



Caring Committee

Melissa Egglar



Cards of greeting or support. A hot meal after a long day at the hospital. A friendly face at the door stopping by for a chat. A ride given to an appointment. A dog walker. A phone call offering a friendly ear. A hug.

These are the offerings of any one person on our Caring Congregation Committee. This "Heart of the Congregation" contains many compassionate UU's who help organize the entire force of those who step up to provide much needed support for our members and friends in need. When you are facing a challenge in your life, whether it be illness related or any hardship or situation, they are here to provide comfort, helping to make the situation a bit easier.

Filtered through our Minister, Rev. Luke Stevens-Royer, and our Coordinator of Congregational Life, Melissa Egglar, news and requests are sent to the Caring Coordinator who covers a two-week time span. The Coordinator then delegates needs to the rest of the committee. Caring for each other is one way that we live up to our mission here at First UU~ "Creating a compassionate, welcoming community that nurtures spiritual growth and practices justice."

The Caring Congregation Committee has also hosted many gatherings honoring different committees, the Board, and staff at First UU. They take care of all of us! When Rev. Luke first joined us, they welcomed him with a lovely afternoon party for him and his new staff! We thank the entire Caring Congregation Group, Coordinators and members, for their compassionate service to us all here at First UU!

"Jen and I have been warmly reminded of the fine First UU Caring Community following her diagnosis in September. Right away we began receiving calls, cards and offers of meals, from both Caring Coordinators and others. The Monday night after the Sunday announcement a generous UU friend who shall go unnamed picked up our tab at a local establishment! The concerns have been directed to Jen and less directly to me but we both appreciate the attention. We are fourteen weeks into Jen's medical journey, all indicators are good and we expect a positive outcome. We are fortunate. But it is reassuring to know that additional support would be available if we asked. Thank you, Caring UU's! "



~ Bruce Bjorgum



"Last year, when I was at my lowest during chemo, it was such a day brightener to find a card or note in my mail with caring messages. I taped each and every one to the wall of my home office so i was surrounded with love. The meals that were prepared and brought to us were a godsend as well. There were days that I didn't have it in me to cook, so not having to worry about feeding my kids was such a blessing. I appreciate everything that was done for me and my family! Gracias!!!"

~ Bonnie Rivera

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

- February 6 **Climate Justice & Social Change**
Join us for a conversation and TED Talk video about climate justice and the Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth. The theme for the discussion will be "Sacred Resistance and Regeneration," led by Paulette DeMers.
- February 13 **Restorative Justice**
Join guest speaker Rev. Kendall Hughes, chaplain at the Federal Medical Center, for a conversation about how our punitive justice system too often creates more suffering and how restorative justice promotes the healing of victims, communities, and the accused.
- February 20 **The Legacy and Persistence of Racial Segregation**
Join Molly Dingel, professor of Sociology at the University of Minnesota Rochester and member of our church, for a conversation and an overview of housing segregation in the United States. She will also illustrate the ongoing and persistent effects of segregation.
- February 27 **450 Year of Pluralism - the Edict of Torda**
Unitarianism was officially recognized for the first time in history by the Edict of Torda in 1568. Join Rev. Luke Stevens-Royer in reflecting on the impact and legacy of this early proclamation from the one (and only) Unitarian King, John Sigismund.

Special Events

- 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.
- April 18 **Dark Night of the Soul**
A service of silence and music echoing traditions of suffering, liberation, and breaking bread, ending with a traditional Universalist Communion.

Church Staff

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Throwback Page

History Highlights of First UU



*First Unitarian Universalist Church meeting in the Hearth room, circa 1980.
Some younger but familiar faces.
L to R: Jasper Daube, Klare Bachman, Marty Peterman, Stephanie Podulke*

*At its core, the religious life is about beginning to trust that being in community
- for conversation, for learning, for inspiration, for spiritual growth - is far better
than living life alone.*

First Unitarian Universalist Church



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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.