

May 2019

Grace Notes

The Monthly Journal of First Unitarian Universalist Church



Curiosity

What does it mean to be a
people of curiosity?

From the Minister

Rev. Luke Stevens-Royer



*I have refused to live
locked in the orderly house of
reasons and proofs.
The world I live in and believe in
is wider than that. And anyway,
what's wrong with Maybe?
You wouldn't believe what once or
twice I have seen. I'll just
tell you this:
only if there are angels in your head will you
ever, possibly, see one.*

-- Mary Oliver

Over and over again in my life –
whether it was during conversations about world religions,
or in trainings about justice and ethics or political strategy –
there would almost always be someone in the room,
some leader who would offer some simple words
as both an invitation and a challenge:
stay *curious*.

Sometimes, it meant trying to learn a new perspective,
to gain a deeper awareness about something that was new or different.
Sometimes, it meant trying to challenge assumptions, and push boundaries,
by pressing, in loving and curious ways, what someone meant
by some phrase, some remark, some story.

Most of the time, I prefer to have things figured out –
schedules, theology, people, politics, social circumstances.
Sometimes I'm right. Sometimes I'm way, way wrong.
Often, at least I hope, I'm somewhere in the middle.

And being in the middle seems like a good place to be –
even when it's not the comfortable place.
Sometimes, having everything [seemingly] figured out is like being contained –
in the orderly house of reason and proofs.

But this faith calls me to something else – curiosity.
Being curious about spirituality, questioning my assumptions.
Curious about other people, and cultures, and perspectives.
Curious about how I might change and grow.
It asks me to stay curious
about this world and this life
and be ready to find some miracle or beauty that I never expected.

From the Board

Kim Reid

Curiosity: What is your brain hungry for?

I grew up as the child of a scientist and a teacher. Curiosity was highly valued in our home, and questions about the world and events around us were frequent at the dinner table. A dictionary and encyclopedia were kept nearby and frequently brought out in an attempt to find answers. Even today, you'll find my family gathered long after a meal, discussing ideas or events and wondering together about questions that arise. We no longer turn to the encyclopedia books – instead the call is to "Google it!" Our tools to answer questions might have changed, but the curiosity my parents fostered hasn't!

Curiosity is a guiding force in UUism as we support each other in exploring our own ideas, beliefs, and faith. There are a number of ways in which I have seen our curiosity come to the fore this year. First and foremost we have been examining the space where we worship and gather. We have been asking ourselves a lot of questions about how this building suits our needs and reflects our values and whether or not the time has come to envision a new or remodeled space. This exploration will continue, and I'm excited to see how our ideas and questions about what we need in a building move forward.

In addition, the youth have been preparing to dig deeper into our UU roots on their trip to Boston. As a UU youth I had a similar opportunity to take a trip to learn more about the Anasazi culture in New Mexico. My son attends a UU church in Denver, and their church recently took an adult group on a trip to Romania to learn more about the birthplace of Unitarianism in the mid-1500s. These adventures to explore our religious history and that of others are fascinating to me and make me curious to go on similar adventures!

Recently I was able to join Rev. Luke and a small group at a reception in the Cities to meet UUA President Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray. On the way home our group talked about the value of connecting to the larger community of UUs through the UUA. I hadn't explored the UUA website much, and my curiosity was sparked, so I did so after we got home. I found an amazing collection of resources on our faith, justice, and inclusion, among others. If you haven't taken the time to explore this site, I encourage you to do so – you'll find much to think about.

As a teacher, I encourage curiosity as part of my job. After a recent lesson on a new math concept, I noticed a particular student was especially engaged in the activity. I asked her if she had enjoyed it and she responded, "Yes, my brain was really hungry for this!" What amazing insight! When it comes to your faith, our church community, our UU history, or connecting with the larger UUA fellowship, what is your brain hungry for?



Historical Curiosity

An excerpt from a January 1966 *Venture*



Circa August 13, 1967

Going back in time is easy when we have written records as detailed as First UU's collection. Curiosity abounds as we read these historical records. It's easy to recognize the design of our present church building as we travel back in time to read what our fellow First UUs were thinking in January of 1966.

The following selection is from a "Special Notice" *Venture*, our church's former monthly newsletter, dated January 1966. In this special notice, congregants were asked to attend a meeting to discuss different building options during the design phase of their future Walden Lane building.

The work accomplished so far by the Building Committee and the architect entails three tentative commitments which require review. These tentative commitments, while being tentative, do imply a direction the project is moving in.

The three tentative commitments we have in mind are as follows:

1.) To a multi-level building. Site factors contribute to this commitment. We could have selected a flat site, but chose a hilly one, instead. Present design concepts strive to take advantage of this site's special features. In doing so, a multi-level building seems dictated (three levels). A different portion of the site could be utilized allowing a single-level edifice, but then one might legitimately ask why we chose a hilly site.

2.) Present design concepts tentatively commit us to a central-court idea around which the building wraps itself on three sides, the fourth being open to a major parking area. This program requires that the building spreads itself out somewhat, but this allows for a less expensive type of construction than would be possible if we were to consider a building several stories high. The court would be treated as a garden area and would serve as a major approach into the three different functional areas of the building.

3.) Related to these two concepts is the third - the multi-unit idea. Under the present tentative commitment, the building would house our four major functional needs in three zones or portions of the building: Education would be in a two-story wing; Administration, in a low, one-story wing; Worship and Fellowship would be one above the other, between the two wings described.

These, then, are the three tentative commitments we are involved in. Do they seem reasonable? desirable? Realizing, of course, that beyond these basic considerations the building committee must resolve in detail with the architect, matters of access, traffic flow, maintenance, heating, etc., etc., does it appear that we are moving in the right direction?

It is in the interest of optimum understanding and communication between the building committee and the whole congregation that this meeting has been called. Come and ask your questions and let the committee explain what it is trying to accomplish. Its task is to arrive at a design-concept it can recommend to the Board of Trustees which in turn, acting on our behalf, must either accept and build, or reject and start over. Careful planning, which we have, and patient understanding, which we wish to develop and maintain, will help to obviate the costly business of moving too far in a wrong direction.

Flashback

Where were you 20 years ago?



1968 photo of just completed Walden Lane Church

In June of 1999, construction started to remodel the church. Darrel Waters wrote the article below in the June 1999 *Venture*.

Capital Project Update (June 1999)

At long last the planning phase is done with. As is apparent to all those who have walked into the church building lately, the building phase of our Capital project has begun. It has taken several years to get to this point.

In 1993 we created a long-range plan stating that we wanted to make our building more accessible. In 1995 the Space Needs Task Force recommended staying with the current building (versus building a new one). A Building Options group was formed in 1995 to create a preliminary plan of what was possible with the current building.

In February 1996, we had a congregational Visioning workshop, followed by an all-church survey in April. In June 1996, the Capital Steering committee was appointed to help get us through the initial planning stages. Visioning, part of the Capital Steering group, created a survey and held focus groups in April 1997.

In June of 1997, the congregation endorsed the capital campaign and directed that the roof portion be completed in advance (remember the multiple leaks we used to have?). Discussion sessions and a Feasibility study were held in October 1997. More information sessions were held in November, and in December the congregation approved the campaign goal of \$700,000 with the project estimated to cost \$795,000 (counting the project). Whew!

In the spring of 1998, we held the fund drive and celebrated with the roof Night In Nottingham kickoff. To date, we have raised close to \$625,000 in pledges and we've already received \$346,500. Thus ended the main fund drive.



1999 mid remodel

In September 1998, we approved final preliminary drawings and Bob Cline, our architect, estimated that our final project (not including the roof) would cost \$516,000. We also approved taking out a mortgage of around \$120,000. Building Options and the architect created construction documents from September through April, then put the project out to bid.

This is where we started running into trouble. The lowest bid, from Weis Builders, was \$778,000. Building Options, working with Weis and the architect, came up with acceptable modifications that dropped the price by \$130,000.

On April 25th, we held an informational meeting and on May 9th we voted to go ahead with the project as modified. This includes a mortgage of around \$243,000 which would result in monthly mortgage payments of \$3,391 starting in 2001. To help reach that goal, we will start making monthly payments of \$800 to the Capital fund from our Annual fund during the coming year.

Next fall the work on the building will be completed. We will have gained an elevator that reaches all 4 levels of the church, a non-leaking roof, a more defined and accessible front entryway, a new & expanded parking lot, air conditioning for much of the building, new carpet, paint on hallway walls and in the religious education wing, and a coat room. More importantly, we will have done this together, setting a goal, working hard to keep everyone involved, and reaching that goal.

Congratulations!



Church circa 2005

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

- May 1 **Chalice Camp**
Each summer, children and youth participate in our week of summer learning and activities - Chalice Camp. Join leaders for this year's program to hear about what's in store, find out how to register or volunteer, and get answers to your questions.
- May 8 **Summer is coming! Really, it's true!**
Join the fellowship (aka ministry of fun) team to brainstorm ideas for summer fun and activities, including pictures from previous fun! Come with ideas for adults, kids - everyone! From baseball games to concerts to nature hikes to playgroups to ice cream - join in the planning, and join in the fun.
- May 15 **Addiction, Intervention & Recovery (rescheduled)**
Join guest Paul Markusen, Intervention Specialist & Recovery Coach, for a conversation about health and wholeness.
- May 22 **Realm**
Join us for a conversation about Realm, our new church management software. What is it? How will I use it? and How do I register? are just a few questions that will be answered. Come with your questions and be prepared for a fun and interactive experience introducing you to Realm.
- May 29 **Outdoor Celebration**
For the last Walden Hill Wednesday of the church year, come for ice cream cones and bring outdoor games for the courtyard - all ages welcome!

Special Events

- May 5 **Maypole Celebration**
- May 19 **Coming of Age**
- May 26 **Beginning of Summer Services**
- June 2 **Annual Meeting**

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Throwback Page

History Highlights of First UU



The Clara Barton Guild toured the building site for our new Walden Lane building, circa 1967.

*"To stay curious
means paying attention to what is right in front of us
and knowing that all of it -
this world, our lives -
are always in a process
of still being created."*

--Anonymous

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.