



From the Minister



Rev. David Kohlmeier is UCH's settled minister.

Since I began at UCH, I have found a lot of you asking, "What was that book you mentioned last Sunday?" So, in the spirit of holiday generosity, here are some of the books y'all have been asking me about. Please check them out, if something strikes you,

and let me know what you think.

After the Good News: Progressive Faith Beyond Optimism (Nancy McDonald Ladd). Moving beyond mere liberal optimism towards a more honest truth-telling and confrontation with our brokenness.

Sabbath as Resistance (Walter Brueggemann). A thin but dense book diving deeply into Biblical teachings on the Sabbath and how keeping the Sabbath can be an act of resistance to a culture of anxiety.

Shelter in this Place Meditations on 2020. A collection of various poems and prayers by a variety of Unitarian Universalists, chronicling a year that we'll never forget. Many of these readings show up on Sunday morning, and I've shared others during committee or team meetings.

The Other Side of Salvation (John Buescher). The story of spiritualism in the 19th century with a focus on the role it played in our Universalist tradition.

Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America (Will Roscoe). Though its language on trans and nonbinary persons is a bit out-of-date, this is one of the key recent works on the phenomenon of diverse gender identities among Native American cultures.

Humanist Voices in Unitarian Universalism. An anthology of essays from a variety of Humanists inside or connected to our faith. Part of a series, and I frankly recommend the entire series. A great way to understand your UU siblings who are Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, Humanist, LGBTQ+, or Pagan. And I'll recommend in advance the following books that will find their way into sermons and services this month, as we find a way to cultivate joy even as the pandemic continues...

First Nations Version: An Indigenous Translation of the New Testament (various translators), and *Cotton Patch Gospel* (Clarence Jordan), both very different and creative presentations of Christian scripture, both of which I'll be using for Christmas Eve this year (and possibly for Easter next year).

Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church (Barbara Holmes). Both an historical and almost mystical exploration of various spiritual practices in the Black Church tradition, with an emphasis on how these practices were tools of survival and resistance under the worst of conditions.

Jesus for the Non-Religious (John Shelby Spong). A deconstruction of the traditional Christian understanding of Jesus, and a reclaiming of the radical human prophet beneath all the legends.

Happy Holidays!

Rev. David

Worship 10:30 a.m. Sundays

December theme: Opening to Joy

Dec. 5: Defiant Joy, Rev. David

There is something defiant in how many ancient cultures, when faced with the dawn of winter, responded by creating holidays and customs of joy. Even as the pandemic rages on, even as so much is unstable in our world, let's find ways and reasons to defiantly rejoice!

Dec. 12: Looking for Emmanuel, Rev. David

In the Christian tradition, one of the titles given to Jesus, especially as Christmas approaches, is "Emmanuel." What does this mean? What deeper story of Jesus' birth and Mary's pregnancy might be hiding beneath the surface of the story, when we pay attention? This service will invite us to take a fresh look at a familiar story and see it in a radically new way.

Dec. 19: Keep Livin', Keep Rejoicin', Rev. David et al.

This service will be co-led by Rev. David and Je Exodus Hooper, an ordained faith leader in the Ethical Culture Movement who is currently doing transformative Humanist ministry with the Susquehanna Valley Ethical Society.

Dec. 24: Christmas Eve!, Rev. David et al.

As we go to press, decisions about how Christmas Eve will look this year are still being finalized.

Dec. 26: No Service

To give our worship team a much-needed rest after the holidays, UCH will not be having a service on Dec. 26. Closer to that day, we will be emailing out a list of Zoom or other virtual options for other services you might attend that day.

Effective Dec. 5, we will worship at Clover Lane, with remote access also available (page 2). Details forthcoming via email announcement.

President's Message



By David Spear, President, Board of Trustees

I love Thanksgiving. It's my favorite holiday of the year, because of its focus on gratitude. I probably mention this every year, but I also need this reminder each year to refocus my thoughts. I could use a reminder every week, to be honest.

This year, I'm especially grateful for my church community. With the continued social isolation from COVID, I have been relying more and more on you to keep me grounded and spiritually uplifted. From what I hear, I'm not the only one, and that paradoxically gives me great encouragement. It also makes me work hard for this church, to support all of us who are in need of care.

I'm also grateful for our Reopening Team, which is following the trends in infections and reviewing the recommendations of the UUA and state and local officials. This is a weighty decision, and I'm grateful that they neither Rev. David nor I have to decide alone. And thrilled to be worshipping in person again in December!!!

This is a topic of discussion for churches and denominations around the country. Everyone is struggling to meet the spiritual needs of their congregations, yet also keep them safe. You can be sure that UCH is following this very, very closely.

I'm grateful for enthusiastic members who are helping around the church. Some are helping the office while we look for a new congregational administrator. Others are doing great work around our grounds.

Have you noticed the new sign at the entrance to our driveway? It has the name of our new minister and our service time. The frame has also been freshened up, and even the bushes around the sign have been trimmed back, so we can see the sign better.

You may have noticed that some trees on our property have red bands around them and some have yellow bands. The

yellow bands mean the tree needs to be pruned, and the red bands mean it needs to be removed, before it falls and causes damage.

The Board has approved spending up to \$15,000 from our capital reserves to address this and any other urgent items. We'll start with the trees around the upper parking lot and building. The trees elsewhere on our property are less likely to cause damage, so we'll get to those later.

And of course I am immensely grateful that we have a settled minister. I probably say that every month, too, but after many years of interim ministry, the stability of having a long-term minister still brings me joy every week. We can actually start making some long-term plans!

Over the last couple of months, Rev. David and the Board have worked through various procedures, finding what still works for our church, and reworking some things that need to be updated.

Some of this is focused on updating job descriptions, reorienting some teams and committees, and revitalizing others. Chief among them is pastoral care, a natural outgrowth of Rev. David's ministry with us, and a known need at the moment.

From a policy perspective, this is very exciting! Policies, procedures, bylaws, and governance should be mostly invisible if they are working right, but the Board is glad that Rev. David is partnering with us to make sure the foundation is strong as we begin our ministry together.

Thanksgiving will be over by the time you read this. But even as we enter Advent and head toward Christmas, please stay focused on gratitude. We are fortunate to be part of this Beloved Community, where we can support each other through difficult times, and encourage each other in our quests for spiritual growth.

David Spear

Sunday Services Update

Effective Dec. 5, UCH intends to conduct worship services on Sunday mornings in the sanctuary again, with live streaming via Zoom. There is limited seating capacity. The church office will send an email with information on how to reserve a seat and any specific instructions for "code of conduct." For those attending services on site, we will follow the color-coded system introduced last summer. This involves color-coded name tags, where the individual signifies:

Table with 2 columns: Color and Description. Rows include Red (socially distanced), Yellow (closer proximity), and Green (comfortable with a hug).

Logistics for on-site services are subject to change, based on changes in COVID.

December Theme: Opening to Joy



By Cory Ness, Director of Religious Exploration (DRE)

As most of you know, UCH has aligned this year's weekly services and the RE program with a series of monthly themes. Our RE program in turn is leveraging information from the [Soul Matters Sharing Circle](#) for much of the detailed material we use for children, youth, and covenant groups. Our December theme is **Opening to Joy**. Background information appears immediately below.

What Does it Mean to be a Family Opening to Joy?

—from Teresa, on behalf of the Soul Matters team

We have to be here, at this time and place, to open to joy.

Let me say that again, because it's very likely that in reading that sentence, you went somewhere else—into your own thoughts, perhaps, or maybe even a judgment such as, "Yea, Teresa...duh." So let me invite you back:

We have to be here, at this time and place, to open to joy.

Are you with me? Good!

Opening to joy moves us into the liminal space between the physical and the spiritual. On the human, physical level, opening to joy allows us to more fully inhabit our own bodies, to forgo the obsessions and resentments of the past, the fears and worries of the future, and instead attune our cells to the happiness available nowhere and no time else but here and now.

With that in mind, we have plenty of games, activities, and questions designed to help families come back to the present this month, where they'll be ready to accept the gifts that are all around them, opening to the abounding joys.

Opening to joy doesn't mean accepting that which is unacceptable, such as sexism, racism, classism, and hate. Rather, it means that we refuse to cede the fullness of our humanity to those who would perpetuate those iniquities, and rather, we relish in our joy as an act of celebration and resistance. This is one aspect of the concept of Black Joy, which we explore more fully in the At the Mailbox section this month. The idea of both/and around justice work and joy also features in our At the Bedside story.

I read a poem this month by Forrest Gander that described someone to whom happiness came naturally. I don't know if that's you or not. Some days, I don't know if that's me, either. But I do know that opening to joy can be like a spiritual muscle that we exercise with practices such as noticing the exquisiteness of life around us, choosing to release ourselves from the grip of fear and resentment, and prioritizing playful engagement even when hanging back might be easier. This month, we'll do these things and more as we practice being families opening to joy together.

Playlists

Please also consider listening to playlists from [Spotify](#) and [YouTube](#) as a form of musical meditation on *Opening to Joy*.

Opening to Joy

It's easy to get tricked,
taken for a ride,
convinced that joy
is a possession.

Something to be opened
just by us.
As if it's a holiday special delivery,
waiting for us to unwrap it
and keep forever.

And who can blame us,
with pain being so prevalent.
Sadness seems to stay.
Why can't joy?

But maybe it's elusive
for a reason.
Maybe it's slippery
in order to help us understand
that it was put here to fly.
Or better yet:
To be flung!
To be passed, not possessed.
To be spread
between you and me,
between the ones who received its gift
and the ones that have been looking for its
treasure
for a very long time.

Maybe it's a beautiful and elegant
contagion,
over which we have more control than we
think.
If only we share it.
If only we notice that joy is not ours to keep,
but ours to give.

Maybe joy opens us
as much as we open to it.

Maybe that's the way light leaks into our
world.



Panelists Sought for LaGrone Scholarship Selection

Ready for a deeply meaningful experience? Here's the opportunity! Serve as one of two adult UCH members on the 2022 Oliver LaGrone Scholarship Selection Panel.

As a panelist, you will need to:

- ⊕ Meet three Thursday evenings: April 7, 14, and 21, 2022
- ⊕ Review the process with your fellow panelists, including two Harrisburg City residents and a UCH youth
- ⊕ Review the 2022 applications from Harrisburg High graduates
- ⊕ Determine (in collaboration with the panel) which sub-set you'll interview
- ⊕ Meet your interviewees and select the 2022 Scholar.

Meetings at the church building, unless Zoom remains the recommended route.

Take pride in participating with the largest locally offered scholarship: the stipend will be \$12,000 for 2022. Take pride in the three prime criteria: 1) motivation to continue education despite obstacles, 2) financial need, and 3) knowledge and skills gained from life that will be helpful for a successful future. Take pride in the unique feature of a personal Scholar Mentor from among the UCH membership.

Oliver LaGrone was active with UCH while teaching at the Pennsylvania State University in Harrisburg and admired by all who knew him--scholar, sculptor, poet, humanitarian, teacher. If interested, please contact [Cordell Affeldt](#).

—Submitted by Cordell Affeldt

Helping People in Prison and their Families

Report from Chaplain Jim Cavanaugh

As a Lay Volunteer Chaplain at the Dauphin County Women’s Work Release Center (WRC), I have ‘office hours’ most Monday afternoons to provide pastoral counseling to the 20 or so women residents. One way the administration supports my chaplaincy is by providing a roster each time I come in. Often the lists show the women’s employers, and UCH folks may be interested to learn which businesses in our area believe in giving re-entering people a second chance.

Here are the businesses we can patronize to show our thanks: Hotel Indigo, Best Western Premier, Home to Stay, Inc., Red Lion Hotel, Ruby Tuesday’s, Crowne Plaza, McDonalds-Paxton Street, Hilton Hotel and Towers, Candlewood Suites Harrisburg, and Graybill Equipment & Repair Inc.

— Submitted by Jim Cavanaugh

December Share the Plate: Susquehanna Harbor Safe Haven

Each month, we share the Sunday plate with a local non-profit. This month, we share with the Susquehanna Harbor Safe Haven (SHSF).

[Susquehanna Harbor Safe Haven](#) (SHSH) is a residential facility offering support and stable housing to men who are/were chronically homeless. It is managed by Christian Churches United of the Tri-County Area. The program offers long-term housing within a supportive community for up to 25 formerly homeless men in Dauphin County. The program is designed to help chronically homeless men—those living on the street for a year or more, many of whom are also dealing with mental illness— to get off the street. Once in a safe, stable environment, they work on goals related to income, employment, life skills, physical and mental health, and, in many cases, addiction. New residents live in dormitory-style housing. Upon achievement of specific goals related to income and stability, they become eligible for one of ten private rooms. Over time, it is their goal to help the men, when able, to move to their own apartment or other permanent housing.



— Submitted by UCH Finance Committee

POWER OF PLACE: Mid-Century Modern (an update)

A Report by the UCH Building Task Force

The UCH Building Task Force was established to investigate and recommend potential building and grounds improvements. As we complete our tasks, we have gained renewed appreciation for the foresight with which our Clover Lane property was developed. This is the second of a series of articles about how the MCM architecture of our building and grounds reflects “The Power of Place.”

Mid-Century Modern is an American design movement in interior, product and graphic design, architecture, and urban development that followed U.S. participation in World War II, 1945-1970. MCM is today recognized by scholars and museums as a significant design movement. It is [characterized by](#) angular structures and clean, simple lines; does not typically include decorative embellishments; and has ample windows and open floor plans to bring the outdoors in.

Our MCM designed aesthetic is most powerful when attentively and consistently honored, and the Task Force took this into consideration in making recommendations earlier this year. Given the current availability of MCM-inspired décor, deliberate, informed commitment to MCM design compatibility is particularly timely.

Power of Place: The Grounds

The Clover Lane campus is an excellent expression of the MCM design aesthetic which maintains clean simple lines. In addition to the building, the original gardens were designed with MCM principles in mind so that the landscaped grounds would frame the building, each element supporting the whole. Three trees in particular help accentuate the landscaping.

🌲 **Weeping Spruce**, front entrance

At the entrance to our building, there is a fine example of our forebearers’ selecting trees that one would find in MCM gardens. A Weeping Spruce, recently “spruced up” by Bonsai Master Jim Doyle of Nature’s Way Nursery (husband of UCH member Libby Tisdell), provides the focal point in that small bed. Last month, Jim spent hours removing dead wood and selecting branches to enhance this handsome evergreen’s asymmetrical beauty.



Jim Doyle prunes the weeping spruce at the front entrance

🌲 **Weeping White Pine**, rear entrance

Similarly, at the rear entrance of the building is another asymmetrical evergreen, a Weeping White Pine, which has not yet benefited from the Bonsai Master’s judicious pruning. Now that Larry Beyer (below) has removed the debris that was crowding it and making it difficult to see, we hope to have its appearance much improved in the near future.

🌲 **Dawn redwood**, along east property line

A third notable tree is the venerable Metasequoia, commonly known as Dawn Redwood. It’s located further away from our building along our east property boundary behind the motel on Eisenhower Boulevard. It’s well worth the short walk to view this evergreen up close.



Weeping white pine, with undergrowth removed

Preparing for the future

Over the past decade, our grounds have become increasingly cluttered with dense vegetation and marginally controlled growth. As reported each year by the Gardens Crew, we have significant problems maintaining the existing beds with a small and aging group of volunteers. In addition, the problems have become exacerbated these past two years by the pandemic, when the crew have had only marginal success in accomplishing basic pruning and mulching.

(Continued on the next page)

POWER OF PLACE: (continued)

With the advent of the task force, we have refocused attention on sustainability of the gardens. This has involved work by many volunteers as we prepare for the future. Many, many thanks to all of the following.

- UCH member Larry Beyer, a retired forester, has spent months with a chainsaw cutting down dense vegetation, small trees, and evergreen trees and bushes in virtually all the beds around the building and along the upper parking lots. He then used his pickup truck to transport all the debris to the far end of the property to decompose. Photos of three of the (previously) most overgrown beds appear below.
- UCH member Ellen Roane, an arborist for the City of Harrisburg, has spent many hours identifying and marking (1) trees that need to be pruned and (2) those that are hazards and need to come down before they fall and cause damage to the building, vehicles in the parking lot, or people entering/exiting the church. Based on her work, we have cordoned off a section of the parking lot to avoid danger of all or portions of the nearby tree falling down.
- We have convened a group of members to develop a master landscape design that will help align the property with its MCM roots while also focusing on long-term maintainability. The Tended Gardens Team includes Anita Mentzer, Ron Skrabut, Debbie Reihart, Cordell Affeldt, Caroline Parke, and Kate Quimby. Anita is a master gardener and has assembled a detailed presentation as discussion material on plantings appropriate for MCM landscaping.
- And special thanks to UCH member Ron Skrabut for years of chairing the Gardens Crew, arranging spring and fall cleanup, and corralling resources for the “perennial” work of basic garden maintenance.



Ellen Roane marks trees for future action

Currently we have several companies providing estimates to undertake our important work of restoring the landscape. The most prominent beds around the building and front lot are cleared; multiple trees are marked for disposition; and we are preparing for next steps in establishing a landscape to support the MCM design of our building.

Anyone interested in supporting garden initiatives at UCH should contact [Ron Skrabut](#) or [Kate Quimby](#).

— Submitted by Kate Quimby, UCH Building Task Force



(Before)



Native flowerbed, cleared



(Before)



Back entry bed, cleared



Parking lot bed, cleared

New Members



Jenn McPoyle

Jenn is originally from the Philadelphia region and moved to Harrisburg with her husband to be closer to the capital. She, her husband, two kids, and one cat have been in central PA for the past 20 years. Jenn is a casual distance runner and loves all things nerdy (Marvel, Star Trek, Disney, etc.).

Over the pandemic, Jenn had time to re-evaluate what was important and meaningful. In a conversation about spirituality with a friend, she was told, "You sound like a Unitarian." That was new, so she started following UCH online and decided that her friend was absolutely correct. Her first time attending was the first time back in-person, and she's excited to be starting down the path with this community!

Her Connection Coach is Bridgette Parker.

Transitions


Chuck and Nancy Cladell

Chuck and Nancy Cladell, long-time friends of UCH, have left their Harrisburg home of 43 years for the Taylor Retirement Community of Laconia, NH. Chuck officially signed the book in 2019 after attending UCH for decades. The couple is happy to be near their daughter and other family in New England, and both have joined the [UU Society of Laconia](#), founded in 1838.

Patricia Tannahill (1936-2021)

Patricia Sue (Gray) Tannahill, mother of UCH member Dan Vaughn, died Nov. 3 in Ephrata of complications from Parkinson's disease. She was 85. In addition to Dan (wife, Sharon), she is survived by four other children and their spouses; numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren; and one sister. Patricia was a long-time member of Conestoga Church of Christ. Her gentle patience and sweet spirit is greatly missed.

Information for Potential New Members



The Unitarian Church of Harrisburg is a welcoming congregation, open to people from any/all (or no) religious backgrounds. If you are new to Unitarian Universalism, we encourage you to peruse [100 Questions that Non-Members Ask about Unitarian Universalism](#) for background information about our faith tradition. An overview of the "Pathways to Membership" at UCH appears on our [website](#).

For further information about our congregation and the membership process, please feel free to reach out to [Bart Carpenter](#) or another member of the Membership Action Council. During the pandemic, we are conducting information sessions via Zoom, and we welcome your inquiries.

— Submitted by Bart Carpenter

Holiday Helpers Needed

The holiday season can be a difficult time for many; in a normal year, it's a time of increased depression, anxiety, grief, and loneliness. That is even worse during the pandemic. Rev. David would like help in doing a special holiday outreach during December to check on every member of our UCH family. If you'd like to volunteer to make phone calls, write cards, or in some other way reach out with love to your fellow UCHers this season, please email [Rev. David](#) right away. Please put "Holiday Care Team" in the subject line.



Post Auction Notice

Thank you all who came to the "Made in PA" auction to support Unitarian-Universalism in the Harrisburg area! Many courageous souls braved the cold, and initially rainy weather. It was wonderful to see people in person, sip a beverage, and warm our hands at the firepit. Others availed themselves of the proxy bidding to get desired items or activities. Together we raised over \$9,000!

If you have questions about your invoice, please contact [Bart Carpenter](#). At press time, there were also a few seats open.

— Submitted by Patti Hazell

Date	Time	Group	Location
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Wed 1	7:00	QueenSpirit (Monthly)	Clover Lane
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QueenSpirit is a co-created women’s spirituality circle that meets on the first Wednesday of the month. This month, the circle will be an in-person dry run-through of the winter solstice program planned for 2021, which had to be rescheduled for 2022 due to COVID numbers rising. The circle will be facilitated by Rebecca Waldemar.

All who identify as women are welcome to come and learn some of the origins of our European solstice traditions. Also note that the service may be recorded by an amateur recording, for private use only. The circle begins at 7:00 p.m., ending by 8:30 p.m., and will be in the Joseph Priestly room. Please wear a mask.



Contact [Rebecca Waldemar](#) (717-364-2029) for further information.

Fri 3	Various	Heart Rhythm Meditation	Zoom
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Heart Rhythm Meditation (HRM) is a type of meditation that involves conscious breathing, in which the individual consciously controls their breathing in order to influence their mental, emotional, and physical state. Join Libby Tisdell in twice-weekly sessions, via Zoom:

- 🕒 Friday mornings from 9:00-10:00 a.m. ([Friday Zoom link](#))
- 🕒 Monday afternoons from 4:30-5:30 p.m. ([Monday link](#))



People can drop in or out as they want. Please contact [Libby Tisdell](#) for additional information.

Wed 8	6:30	Grounds Design Discussion	Clover Lane
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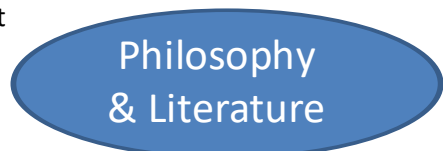
The Tended Gardens Team of the UCH Building Task Force (page 5) meets this evening to discuss landscaping at Clover Lane. We are prioritizing the beds around the building and discussing natural, low-maintenance options. If you are interested, please plan to attend!



For other information, please contact [Kate Quimby](#).

Sun 12	6:00	Philosophy and Literature Group (Monthly)	Zoom
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The Philosophy & Literature Group meets on the second Sunday of each month, normally at 7:00 p.m. and (historically) at the church. This month, the group meets at [La Fiesta Restaurant](#), 3957 Paxton Street to select 11 books for 2022. In preparation for the meeting, members should nominate two books apiece ahead of time and send details to [Don Brown](#). At the December meeting, they should be prepared to discuss their nominations. At the end of the meeting, we will rank choices to select 11 books for next year.



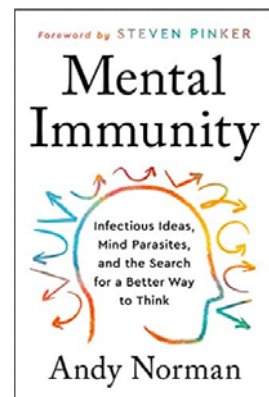
Please contact [Don Brown](#) for information.

Wed 15	7:00	UCH Humanists	Zoom
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UCH Humanists invite you to join a Zoom presentation and discussion with Andy Norman. Andy is the award-winning author of *Mental Immunity: Infectious Ideas, Mind-Parasites, and the Search for a Better Way to Think*. His work has appeared in *Scientific American*, *Psychology Today*, *Skeptic*, *Free Inquiry*, and *The Humanist*.

From Amazon.com:

“Why do people reject science and believe online conspiracy theories? How are people radicalized online and go on to commit acts of violence? Why is our society so politically polarized? Astonishingly irrational ideas are spreading. Covid denial persists in the face of overwhelming evidence. Anti-vaxxers compromise public health. Conspiracy thinking hijacks minds and incites mob violence. Toxic partisanship is cleaving nations, and climate denial has pushed our planet to the brink. Meanwhile, American Nazis march openly in the streets, and Flat Earth theory is back. What the heck is going on? Why is all this happening, and why now? More important, what can we do about it?”



Everyone is invited to join a provocative discussion. Contact [Rachel Mark](#) for additional information.