



The Unitarian Church of Harrisburg: Building Bridges, Celebrating Community

## From the Minister

Rev. David Kohlmeier is UCH's settled minister.



This month, our theme is "Cultivating Relationship." Unitarian Universalism is a faith with a strong emphasis on personal freedom, and yet, hasn't the pandemic taught us the dangers of putting personal freedom above relationship?

That's why covenant is so important. In our tradition, we don't have a common creed or doctrine we all share, but we are part of the church because we choose to be. And when we join the church, we choose to be responsible to and accountable to each other. THAT is covenant. Covenant makes a spiritual practice out of cultivating relationship, because covenant is all about relationship. To enter into covenant is to commit to each other.

And something happens in that relationship. There is something mysterious about covenant, where somehow the whole becomes more than the sum of its parts. Martin Buber, the Hasidic philosopher, said, "When two people relate to each other authentically and humanly, God is the electricity that surges between them." Or as Glen Thomas Rideout wrote, "We're getting Michelangelo all wrong. / god is not the bearded one surrounded by angels... no. / god is the closing inch of space / between their reaching fingers."

Not all of us may want to use the word "god" for this experience, but I share these quotes to remind us that covenant, true committed relationship, will always open us to something transformative. We'll discover something new about ourselves, about what it is to be human, maybe even about the Universe itself. Relationship matters.

I know it's hard to feel connected right now. I know these are lonely times. That's why, please, stay connected. Reach out. Don't try to go alone. And keep reaching out to see who needs your help. We need each other. We need our covenant.

As we say every week in our worship service: *"Love is the spirit of this church, and service is our gift. This is our great covenant: to dwell together in peace, to speak our truths in love, and to help one another."*

In peace,

Rev. David

## Worship 10:30 a.m. Sundays

### October theme: Cultivating Relationship

#### Oct. 3: Compassionate Community, Rev. David

In a world defined so often by cruelty and competition, where "individual freedom" seems to matter more than the common good, how can we become, instead, a community of compassion and connection? The answer lies in our tradition's teaching of "covenant." Let's explore this together.

#### Oct. 10: Beyond Binaries, Rev. David

This service honors both Indigenous People's Day and National Coming Out Day. We'll listen to and celebrate the unique stories of transgender, genderqueer, and gender non-binary folks in our church, learn about Native American ideas of gender, and seek deeper relationships beyond binary thinking.

#### Oct. 17: My Grandmother's Curse, Ann Stillwater

We often do not see how our ancestors' unrealistic expectations impact our relationships with ourselves. Healing this generational trauma allows me to love myself the way I am.

#### Oct. 24: UN Day: All-In for Climate Justice, Rev. David

In this service, we'll be joining with other UU congregations in observing United Nations Day this year with a focus on climate and food justice. Our 6th Unitarian Universalist Principle says "We covenant to affirm and promote the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all," and our 7th summons us to "respect for the interdependent web of all existence." This service will take us deeper into the space where both these principles connect.

#### Oct. 31: "Give Us a Sign that You're There! – Cultivating Relationship with the Other Side, Rev. David

It's Halloween! For ancient Anglo-Saxons, this time of year was when the veil between the worlds of the living and dead grew thin, meaning all kinds of spirits could roam the earth. Over time, this became the largely secular holiday of Halloween. But what relationship do the living have with the dead? This sermon will look at such spooky practices such as séances, Ouija boards, and more, to answer this question.

#### Logistics

At present, we are conducting services in the sanctuary each Sunday, with congregants participating remotely via Zoom. Each Sunday morning, the church will email:

- 🔗 A link to the Zoom of the service
- 🔗 A link to the Zoom session for 11:30 coffee and conversation

We also encourage members to set aside a small sacred space at home to enjoy the service. Having rituals in place at home can help us participate in services together, even though we are not able to be sharing in one another's company in person.

Finally, we will post a recording of the service on [the UCH YouTube channel](#) as soon as we can following the service.

### President's Message



By David Spear, President, Board of Trustees

It's hard to believe that Reverend David has been with us for two months already. After waiting so long for the arrival of our settled minister, the first two months have flown past.

We have kept him extremely busy in these first two months. We knew that he would be busy as he got to know our congregation, our members, our groups, and the way we do things, but he was even busier than anyone expected. Much of this is from providing pastoral care to our UCH community.

But fear not, because we are working hard to get our settled minister settled in. His busy-ness has delayed our plans a little, but don't be unsettled by these, because we will settle our settled minister as quickly as we can. You can be sure that we will not settle for anything less than full settlement, because our congregation has high standards for a settled minister.

The Board will also be busy on Saturday, October 2, as we hold our annual planning retreat. We have found a way to meet safely in person, to stimulate some discussion about our plans and goals for this church year. Some of these will be taken from the *Goals for Institutional Transformation* that were developed in 2018. Of the nine goals, some have been fully completed. Many of them, however, are long-term goals that require attention year after year.

One obvious goal will be working with our new minister to help him flourish. We will learn his way of doing things, his perspective, his preferences, and his style, and we will structure the church to support those. We will find out his specific needs and develop ways to support him.

We will also set some specific goals for this church year, including methods to support Rev. David. We will also address our governance, which has been on our minds for several years, but will be easier to work on with a long-term minister. Re-establishing our committee structure and getting our members involved in the work and life of the church is an important part of this. And there is COVID to think about.

This month we will also say farewell to Kel Kyle, who has served as our Congregational Administrator for the past eight years. Kel was hired in 2013, just prior to the arrival of Rev. Eric Posa as our first interim minister. Kel has been a dedicated employee who provided continuity throughout our eight years of interim ministry. Their last day will be October 7. Please join me in thanking them for these eight years of service to our congregation.

Rev. David and the Board are considering our next steps after this departure. We will take our time before acting: our congregation has changed significantly in the past eight years, and the world around us has changed also. It seems prudent to tailor our next steps to our needs at this moment and the coming years. In the meantime, we ask your forbearance as things move a little bit more slowly than usual. We might even be able to use your help in the interim.

We will continue settling our almost-settled settled minister at whatever pace is possible. There is great work happening around the church, and sometimes progress takes longer than we expect.

Reverend David will eventually be fully settled, the Board will have its goals for the year, and our members will be involved more fully in the life of our congregation. We choose to do things well, and our transitions will happen at the pace that life allows.

David Spear

### October Share the Plate: Gather the Spirit for Justice

Each month, we share the Sunday plate with a local non-profit. This month, we share with Gather the Spirit for Justice.

[Gather the Spirit for Justice](#) (GTSFJ) is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization that brings together Allison Hill residents, area organizations, businesses, and churches to address issues of social justice and economic equity. It was jointly founded by UCH and the Shared Ministry during the time we operated at 1508 Market Street. It now operates out of Christ Lutheran Church, 124 South 13th Street.

GTSFJ strives to be a place where people can find common ground, to meet and discuss the changes that need to be made to make Harrisburg a great place to live for all of its citizens.

During the COVID pandemic, GTSFJ is not open for community hours, but it is working to make its current space more usable for visitors. It also continues to work in Allison Hill by providing masks and hand washing stations in strategic locations near their Christ Lutheran Church and by encouraging voter engagement together with Power to the Hill.

– Submitted by UCH Finance Committee



### October Theme: *Cultivating Relationship*



By Cory Ness, Director of Religious Exploration (DRE)

As 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 October theme is **Cultivating Relationship**.

The text below, excerpted from *Soul Matters*, provides context for our October theme.

#### On Cultivating Relationship

Pandemic time is teaching us so many things about relationships.

It's undone our assumptions about work, calling into question the worth of "going into the office" and exposing how we pass most of the economic pain down to those on the so-called lowest rungs of the ladder.

It's clarifying that there is no real replacement for in-person connection, and certainly reminding us how precious human touch really is.

Our friendships were weeded out and realigned, inviting us to now prioritize those that are essential over those that are instrumental.

We noticed how much costuming is required of us, not just making it clear how sweats are so much more comfortable than suits and fashionable heels, but also helping us notice how insidiously our "required gear" ranks us and separates us from each other.

Routines once forsaken were welcomed back in and suddenly the sacredness of unhurried habits like sit-down dinners, dog walks and making our own bread reasserted themselves.

The promise and precariousness of the common good has been placed center stage, reminding us that when people aren't willing to make small sacrifices for the larger whole, pandemics don't end.

We've learned and are learning all this because Covid brought so much to a halt. It put on the brakes and made us pause. We've had time to look around. To notice.

And maybe that's the most important thing we've learned about cultivating relationships, the central thing we need to remember when we are finally able to move on: To go slow.

How long has it been friends since we carefully considered our relationship to speed? A slower pace. A quieter way of moving. A more careful way of dancing with each other. It's the secret so rarely mentioned, and so often overlooked. Simply put, relationships are really hard to build and care for when we are running.

May this month help us hold on to that. May it be one of the lessons we remember most. May we all be blessed by the sacredness of moving at a snail's pace

#### What Does it Mean to be a Family Cultivating Relationship?

Relationships ask us to answer the "who" questions: Who is in our circle of friendship? Who is not? Who makes up our family? Whose absence in our family do we notice and remember? Who were we yesterday? And who are we now, changed?

These questions, pondered together, take us right to the heart of what it means to be human. It is in relationship with others that we come to know ourselves and our place on the interconnected web of all existence. This is where we find ourselves this month as Soulful Home families.

English pronouns get in the way here, but in other languages, there is no distinction between the pronoun used for a sibling or a tree or the ocean--they are all personal pronouns--"who" pronouns-- indicating our inextricable link with all of creation. This month, we'll be stretching beyond English's limitations and cultivating relationships with these other creations, too. Our Around the Neighborhood section invites us into a grand adventure of acknowledging the non-human entities around us with whom we interact every day.

At least once this month, be sure, too, to seek out that trusted friend, or make time with your parenting partner, to sit out "On the (metaphorical!) Porch." There, you'll find "At Least Ten Reasons Why You Love Them," and a handful of carefully chosen questions that will help you go deeply together into both your pasts, presents, and futures.

Any grower can tell you that cultivating can be tough work, and our current times have certainly taught us that nourishing our relationships can be no easy endeavor, either. Let your time with your family challenge and inspire you to keep at it together, along with Soulful Home families all over the continent, because we know that it is our connections that will save us and keep us rooted in "home."



**UNITARIAN CHURCH  
OF HARRISBURG**  
Reproductive Justice Allies

### Harrisburg Rally on Oct 2

The lay-led Reproductive Justice Allies group at UCH encourages all and sundry to participate in a community rally from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 2, in downtown Harrisburg. You can RSVP at the [online site](#), sign up via the [Facebook event](#), or provide monetary support to [Planned Parenthood](#). In addition to Reproductive Justice Allies, the event is cosponsored by Planned Parenthood Keystone and the Pennsylvania Religious Coalition for Reproductive Justice.

— Submitted by Jim Cavanaugh

## BANS OFF OUR BODIES

MARCH & RALLY FOR  
REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

SATURDAY, OCT 2 | 11 AM - 1 PM  
HARRISBURG, PA

RSVP NOW  
[bit.ly/BansOffOurBodiesPA](http://bit.ly/BansOffOurBodiesPA)



### Guest Column

By Rachel Mark

Ed. Note: Rachel was unable to deliver the following lay liturgist reflection on Sept. 26.

I suspect that the title of today’s message, *Embracing the Darkness*, resonates with most of us because it seems that we are currently inundated by bad news, when even scanning the front page of a newspaper becomes a minefield.

Most of us are dealing with darkness in some form or other, whether it be personal loss, worries about health, finances, or societal breakdown.

On a global scale, an increasing source of deep concern, if not alarm, for many people is climate change, and with it, the obvious need for urgent action. How to communicate dire news is always difficult, and that is certainly true for climate change. We seem to be stuck between impossible and unthinkable.

When feeling overwhelmed, we probably need to step back to a safe place where we can think clearly and rationally about how to respond. A safe place allows us to connect with people whose values we share, a place to find the courage and motivation to move forward in the face of the unknown, whether it be climate, women’s rights, the wealth gap, or our democracy.

It is well documented that taking action is the best antidote to fear, anger, and despair. Joanna Macy calls it active hope – hope which comes from relating to others and building a community with shared purpose. UUJusticePA offers that community. We approach each issue by sharing information, agreeing on how we can respond, and supporting one another.

Rational hope accepts that success is not inevitable. It takes courage to do that, but when we are doubtful, when the odds are low, and success is possible rather than probable, it’s that courage and hope that carry us forward

One climate scientist I follow says this: “We’re not fighting for a merely ‘livable’ planet, we’re fighting for a riotous, wild, gorgeous, generous, miraculous, life-cradling planet that’s home to a society that works for everyone.” Now that’s a goal we can all dream to aspire to.

There is also this sentiment written by Unitarian John Halstead in his book, *Another End of the World is Possible*: “For now, this is where I am choosing to stand. On this little bit of earth which I love, with these people who I love.”

UUJusticePA offers a way to take our stand on this little bit of earth we call home.



### **LaGrone Report**

Heather Rojas (2021 LaGrone Scholar) is a very busy and motivated young woman. Heather originally planned to be a mathematician, as she has always excelled at math. But when her baby was born (December 2019) and admitted to the newborn intensive care unit (NICU), Heather's goals changed direction.

As her mentor, I've been able to spend some time with Heather and I can say she is ambitious, motivated and has a lot on her plate!

She has finished all of her general education courses at Harrisburg Area Community College (HACC) and is now enrolled in the Pennsylvania College of Health Sciences in Lancaster. Her goal is to become a registered nurse and work in a NICU. She is already considering staying in school for a master's degree in Nursing. Currently she is taking courses online Monday through Thursday and doing "clinical" on Friday in Lancaster. Next semester she will have to go to Lancaster every day.

She also needed to replace her older laptop (owned by her brother) with a newer model in order to take the online courses. Many thanks to the group of UCH women, members of a monthly reading group, who chipped in to replace it.

Heather is carrying a LOT of responsibilities. In September, her mother was in Ecuador visiting family for a few weeks, so Heather was taking care of her 20-month-old daughter, her disabled maternal grandmother, and watching over her younger sister.

The road to becoming a nurse is very different today than it was when I became a nurse. But it's never been more important. In this day of the SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19) pandemic we've never needed nursing professionals more. Nurses are exhausted. A lot have quit the profession. Currently, just the state of California has a deficit of 40,000 nurses!

Heather Rojas has admirable goals and is a very worthy recipient of the Oliver LaGrone Scholarship.

— Submitted by Susan Jones-Sink, Heather's LaGrone Scholarship Mentor



### **Alana Wright (1974-2021)**

UCH member Alana Wright, 46, died Sept. 1 of complications from epilepsy, after a lengthy hospitalization. Services were held Sept. 23 in Enola. They are survived by their spouse, Joscelin Lamar, and other members of their extended family.

Alana was a graduate of Penn State Harrisburg and Shippensburg University and worked most of their professional life at the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency. Alana and Joscelin found UCH in 2014, primarily worshipping at the Market Street campus. Alana supported We March. We Act (now known as Power to the Hill) and other social justice ministries at the Market Street location. Outside UCH, they were heavily involved in the Society for Creative Anachronism.



### **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



Date	Time	Group	Location
<b>Fri 1</b>	<b>Various</b>	<b>Heart Rhythm Meditation</b>	<b>Zoom</b>
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🕒 Friday mornings from 9:00-10:00 a.m. (<a href="#">Friday Zoom link</a>)</li> <li>🕒 Monday afternoons from 4:30-5:30 p.m. (<a href="#">Monday link</a>)</li> </ul> <p>People can drop in or out as they want. Please contact <a href="#">Libby Tisdell</a> for additional information.</p>			
<b>Wed 6</b>	<b>6:00</b>	<b>QueenSpirit (Monthly)</b>	<b>Offsite</b>
<p>QueenSpirit is a co-created women’s spirituality circle that meets on the first Wednesday of the month. This month, we will experience forest bathing at Detweiler Park (1451 Peters Mountain Rd, Dauphin, PA 17018). Forest bathing allows us to be immersed in the forest, taking her in with all our senses. A ritual will connect us to nature and our own inner stillness.</p> <p>All who identify as women are welcome to join in co-creating our sacred time together. We will meet at the park at 6 p.m. and conclude by 8 p.m. Please bring snacks or picnic food to share along with plates, utensils, napkins, and plenty of water. Contact <a href="#">Rebecca Waldemar</a> (717-364-2029) for further information.</p>			
<b>Sun 10</b>	<b>7:00</b>	<b>Philosophy and Literature Group (Monthly)</b>	<b>Zoom</b>
<p>The Philosophy &amp; Literature Group meets on the second Sunday of each month, normally at 7:00 p.m. and (historically) at the church. During the current pandemic, the session is a virtual meeting via Zoom. This month, the group meets to discuss <i>Metropolis: A History of the City</i>, by Ben Wilson. From Amazon.com:</p> <p><i>In a captivating tour of cities famous and forgotten, acclaimed historian Ben Wilson tells the glorious, millennia-spanning story how urban living sparked humankind's greatest innovations.</i></p> <p>Please contact <a href="#">Don Brown</a> for information.</p>			
<b>Tue 26</b>	<b>6:30</b>	<b>Auction Planning Committee</b>	<b>Zoom</b>
<p><b>Theme:</b> Made in PA <b>Date:</b> Saturday, November 13, 2021 <b>Place:</b> UCH Clover Lane</p> <p>The Auction Planning Committee meets the fourth Tuesday of each month. This month, the meeting is again via Zoom. Start thinking now about auction ideas and donations for 2021! Come brainstorm ideas, themes, and be a part of the fun, food, and fabulous Auction Committee. Your talent and help planning the 2021 Church Auction is always welcome. We are looking for ideas to make this year's auction a huge success.</p> <p>Please contact <a href="#">Patti Hazell</a> (717-576-9848) for additional information. A Zoom link will be sent to Auction Committee members a few days prior to the meeting.</p>			

**Auction Update: Daytime Event Planned for Nov. 13**

Has anyone who moved to the area been surprised at some of the short entrance ramps and unusual exit/entrance patterns on our local freeways? I-83 was one of the first interstates to be built and includes some early features that did not work so well. The modern super-highway was “Made in PA!” On October 1, 1940, the first section of the Pennsylvania Turnpike, from Carlisle to Irwin opened. Although New York State had earlier limited access roads, Pennsylvania’s was the longest and included many firsts!



What “Made in PA” transportation-related services and items can you donate to UCH’s 2021 “Made in PA” auction? Do you know how to take dents out of cars that had trouble with the short merge lanes? Can you teach someone how to change their own oil or tire? Perhaps you could offer wisdom on an electric or hybrid car for those who are seeking a more sustainable way to use the highway system. Don’t get caught in the traffic jam—submit your auction donations before October 1 (OOPS THAT IS RIGHT NOW!) to [uchauction@gmail.com](mailto:uchauction@gmail.com). Be prepared for a construction zone-like traffic flow in the church building for the auction on **THE AFTERNOON** Saturday, November 13 (rain date Sunday, November 14), and stay tuned for traffic updates as you enjoy the scenery at our “Made in PA” auction.

— Submitted by Patti Hazell