

EAST BREEZE



Newsletter of the James Reeb Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Madison, Wisconsin
Volume 27, Number 12 — December 2018

December theme: What does it mean to be a people of mystery?

"We imagine the Divine as distant and inaccessible, whereas in fact we live steeped in its burning layers."

-- Teilhard de Chardin

Connections

When I consider what it means to be a people of mystery, I think about our faith tradition, and the main ideas in which it has always been grounded. There are three from our Unitarian heritage. The first of these is freedom, especially the freedom to question; the primary tenet of our liberal theology is that there is always more to learn, and questioning is where learning begins. The second is reason; we believe it is important to use our brains to process and analyze all we experience. Third has been tolerance, an idea that is evolving into acceptance as we embrace a desire to be welcoming, which is more than simply tolerating others. And from our Universalist heritage, we embrace the core value of love – the idea that there is a love greater than our individual selves. I've reflected often on that love, saying things like "there is a love holding us" and "a love we bring into being." Those two statements could, if heard through only the lens of reason, seem contradictory.

I think this is where mystery enters. Even though we have this deep rational streak, to which the ideas of freedom, reason, and acceptance speak well, we also know, deep in our hearts, that there is more to life than that to which we can apply our thinking minds. There is also the language of the heart, which sometimes speaks in ways we can't explain, and which allows for the possibility of holding many understandings of that which is greater than us. There is a wonder threaded through our lives that we access when we have experiences of love and beauty and awe that break our hearts open. I think mystery is about allowing ourselves to be spoken to by that wonder. What does that look like for you?

In faith and love, Karen

10 AM Sunday Services

12/2 "Our Hands"

The Rev. Karen Armina and guests

This week marks the 25th anniversary of the signing of our charter! This multi-generational service will celebrate JRUUC with reflections from Rev. Karen and some of our founders, a hand blessing to honor all that has been done to create this community, and beautiful music.

12/9 "Waiting in the Dark"

The Rev. Karen Armina

The Christian season of Advent is a time of stillness and anticipation, and the season of winter is a time of rest for many things and beings. This morning we'll explore the spiritual significance of spending time in the darkness.

12/16 "The Heart of Our Faith"

The Rev. Karen Armina

There is room in Unitarian Universalism for many sources of wisdom, including direct experience of that which is larger than ourselves. This morning, we'll explore mysticism within our faith tradition.

12/23 "Answers and Questions"

The Rev. Karen Armina

Despite the great work of the sciences to offer some understanding of our Universe, we only have pieces of the whole story, and there are deep mysteries intertwined with what we know. This morning, we'll explore how not knowing the answers has formed some of the most intriguing questions.

12/30 "A Pause at the End of the Year"
Jean Skinner and Rachel Avery
Join us for a quiet service of meditation and music.

Special Holiday Services



Wednesday Evening Vespers Service Home for the Holidays December 5 at 7 pm Led by Carin Bringelson

The holiday seasons can find us feeling overwhelmed. This mid-week worship will invite you to: Slow down, Return to your senses, and Experience home in your body. (Carin M. Bringelson is a Candidate for Unitarian Universalist Ministry and Student Minister at First Unitarian Society. A recording device will be used for educational purposes.)

"The Path Through the Dark Wood" A Winter Solstice Celebration Saturday, December 22 at 5 pm Led by the Rev. Karen Armina, Heather Yonker, the JRUUC Choir and JRUUC Chime Choir

Our celebration features reflection, meditation, music, and connection as we move through the transition towards light. This beloved event has gained praise and popularity in the community. We invite you to join us and bring your friends!



Christmas Eve Candlelight Service Monday, December 24 at 5 pm Led by the Rev. Karen Armina

Join us for an all-ages worship, featuring hymns, stories, and candles, to celebrate the story of Jesus' birth. Doug Erickson will provide the music.

December Check-in question: Is there anything in which you place your trust or faith that cannot be explained rationally?



Minister's Office Hours in December

Rev. Karen will be off on Tuesday and Wednesday, December 25 and 26, but will be available via phone or text for emergencies. She will also be out of town Saturday, December 29 through Friday, January 4. Please contact Cindy Rudd (608-469-5269) if you have a pastoral emergency during this time, and she will contact the minister on call.

In the weeks before Christmas, Rev. Karen is in the office on Thursdays from 11:30 am until 3:30 pm (she will not hold office hours on Thursday, December 27). She can also be found at Café Brittoli (formerly Café Zoma) on Tuesdays between 1:30 and 3:30. And she's more than happy to meet with you for a cup of coffee/tea or a walk at any other mutually agreed-upon time – just call to set it up!

Many Hands Coalition

Saturday, December 8

9 am - 1 pm

Please join us in caring for our building!

We have jobs large and small for all ages and abilities, including touch-up painting, cleaning windows, organizing, filing music, vacuuming, making an artistic display for the solstice, cleaning our chairs, and more!

We will order some food from our partners on 4th Street.

We hope to see you Dec. 8!

Contact Bev Buhr,
bevobuhr@gmail.com or 608-244-2115,
if you have any questions.



President's Column

My Aunt Kathy sent me a sweet email for Thanksgiving with a poem that made me think of our JRUUC community. It is apparently a paraphrase of a quote from John Wesley (1703-1791), an English cleric and theologian whose writings inspired Methodism, although probably based on his sermons and teachings.

Do all the good you can,
by all the means you can,
in all the ways you can,
in all the places you can,
at all times you can,
to all people you can,
as long as you can.

A simple children's chalice lighting conveys the idea of doing good for others even to our youngest:

We are Unitarian Universalists, with open minds, loving hearts, and hands ready to serve.

In this time of preparation for darkness of winter and holiday rituals and busy-ness, I'm going to take time to do as much good as I can. I find that the more I give to this community, the more I receive and the more I feel like I belong. It feels good! So, come decorate, come help at the Many Hands work day, come to Vespers, sign up to help with RE (coordinator, snacks, teacher, committee member), come make and buy crafts, come on Sundays, come during the week to clean, come for holiday celebrations, plan to come to Mission cottage meetings in January, and come with your open mind and loving heart.

Peace and Merry,
Jocie.



Music Mystery: The Path

*When windows that are black and cold are lit anew
with fires of gold,
When dusk in quiet shall descend and darkness
comes, once more my friend.*

From "How Sweet the Darkness" by Rachel Bates and Jason Shelton, *Singing the Journey*, #1055

May The Path You Walk Upon lead you to James Reeb UUC this December, our month of Sweet Radiant Mystery. And Thanks be to the hands that have come together for a special chime choir this month!

Join us December 22 for "The Path Through the Dark Wood," a winter solstice celebration in story and song, brought to you by members and friends of the JRUUC choir. This beloved annual event has gained praise and popularity in the community. Join us for reflection, meditation, music and connection as we move through the transition towards light. Mark your calendars and bring your friends! Do not tarry in making plans to attend this special event, rich in rejuvenation.

Below, enjoy my selections from Soul Matters and personal query:

Excerpt from a sermon entitled "On the Way" by The Rev. Luke Stevens-Royer

<https://whitebearunitarian.org/on-the-way-03-20-16-sermon>

My prayer is that... we focus on what this church means to us in the positive rather than how it is better than, different than, more evolved than, more intelligent than, more educated than, more justice-seeking than, someone else's faith, creed, hopes, or dreams... to remember we don't have all the answers, that our openness to mystery and

questions doesn't become an absolutism of rejection of any tradition that offers something different; and that we don't assume we are the only ones who are open, loving, have questions, love mystery, or have different ideas about religion and faith and God and love and humanity...

Winter Solstice (excerpt)

Rebecca Parker

<https://movementfromwithin.net/winter-solstice/>

Let there be a season when holiness is heard, and the splendor of living is revealed...

There are inexplicable mysteries. We are not alone. In the universe there moves a Wild One whose gestures alter earth's axis toward love...

Falling into the Sky (Based on a Poem by Zen Monk Muso Soseki)

The Rev. David Breeden (UU Humanist Minister)

<http://blueyrareview.com/tag/falling-into-the-sky/>

Years end ways

I dug and dug

Deeper into the earth

Looking for blue heaven

Choking always

On piles of dust rising

Then once

At midnight

I slipped

And fell into the sky

The Door to God

Hafiz

Where is the Door to God?

In the sound of a barking dog,

In the ring of a hammer,

In the drop of rain,

In the face of

Everyone I see.

Music selections

"Mysterious Ways," U2

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TxcDTUMLQJI>

"Let the Mystery Be," Iris DeMent

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIaoR5m4L80>

"Fall Down As the Rain," Joe Crookston

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KrdIYftMn94>

"Let the Mystery In," Clarence Bucaro

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u7KtcOTX3YI>

"We Are," Sweet Honey in the Rock

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NzJPRyauMME>

Movie Selections

The Diving Bell and the Butterfly

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the_diving_bell_and_the_butterfly_2007

An immeasurably moving film about the mystery and miracle of inner life.

The Tree of Life

https://www.stltoday.com/entertainment/movies/reviews/article_0753e1aa-1f34-55b1-82dc-c2f6e9abe9e6.html

"Ideally, you would bathe in a film like this without striving to decipher it. As it's a film about what we can't get our heads around, we are probably not meant to get our heads round it." From reviews.

Awakenings

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/1032970_awakenings

The much-loved Robin Williams film that wakes us up to the mystery, miracle, and preciousness of human awareness and connection.

Waking Life

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/waking_life

"If there was ever a film that made ontological exploration fun, this is it." - review

Books

Rational Mysticism: Spirituality Meets Science in the Search for Enlightenment, John Horgan

<https://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/23/books/chapters/rational-mysticism.html>

"Chronicles the most advanced research into such experiences as prayer, fasting, and trances in this 'great read.'" The Washington Post

Freethinking Mystics with Hands: Exploring the heart of Unitarian Universalism, the Rev. Tom Owen-Towle

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/1345459.Free_thinking_Mystics_with_Hands

Poetry

move on -- based on Proverbs 4

Alyssa Underwood

go on your way
My beloved child
turn aside from
the swerving path
untangle your gaze
to center on Me
stand in courage
hugging wisdom
guard all thoughts
leaning upon My love
release what's behind
and walk on in joy

The Forest Path

Lucy Maud Montgomery

Oh, the charm of idle dreaming
Where the dappled shadows dance,
All the leafy aisles are teeming
With the lure of old romance!

Down into the forest dipping,
Deep and deeper as we go,
One might fancy dryads slipping
Where the white-stemmed birches grow.

Lurking gnome and freakish fairy
In the fern may peep and hide . . .
Sure their whispers low and airy
Ring us in on every side!

Saw you where the pines are rocking
Nymph's white shoulder as she ran?
Lo, that music faint and mocking,
Is it not a pipe of Pan?

Hear you that elusive laughter
Of the hidden waterfall?
Nay, a satyr speeding after
Ivy-crowned bacchanal.

Far and farther as we wander
Sweeter shall our roaming be,
Come, for dim and winsome yonder
Lies the path to Arcady!

Mystery Questions for Conversation or Reflection

1. Do you spend more time treating life like a problem to be solved, a game to be won, a struggle to be survived or a mystery to be lived?
2. It's said that we will never experience the fullness of our being until we get in touch with the mysterious "divine that dwells within us." Has this been true for you? Maybe more importantly, what if it's true?

O Sweet Radiant Mystery, set us free from
that which binds, beckoning the soul to fly.

-- Catherine Dalton

Seasons Best,

Heather Yonker



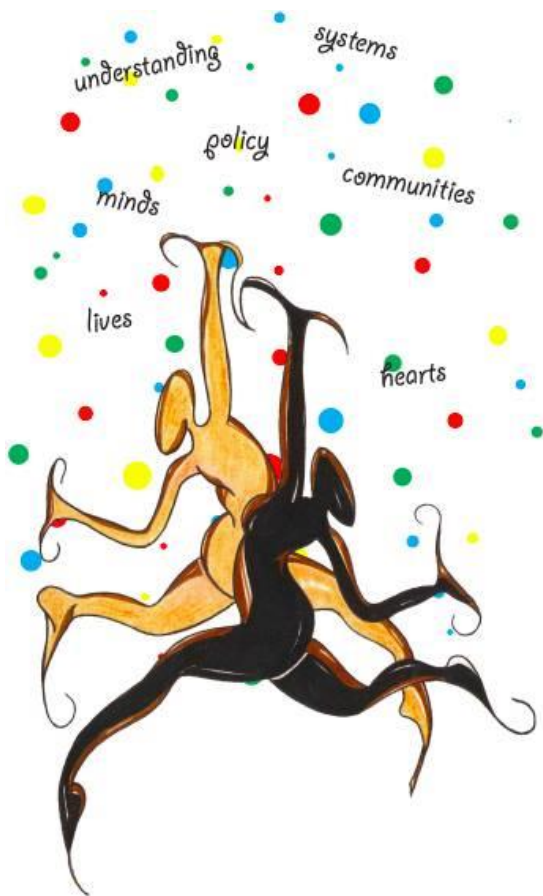
Holiday Craft and Bake Sale Sunday December 16

Don't miss this opportunity for some last minute shopping!

Hand crafted items and holiday treats from the members of James Reeb. Of course we need your help to provide these items!

While you do your baking, please set aside some items to bring to the sale. Contact Cindy at clrudd47@gmail.com or 608-469-5269 if you have questions.

Justice at JRUUC



MOSES Fundraising Gala
TRANSFORMATION CELEBRATION
Saturday, December 15, 6:30 - 10:45 pm
Brassworks at the Goodman Center,
214 Waubesa St.

Food: Heavy Hors d'oeuvres

Awards: Eugene Smalls, Minister, Madison Pentecostal Assembly; Carmella Glenn, Program Manager, Just Bakery; and James Morgan, Peer Support Specialist, Madison-area Urban Ministries

Music: Tani and the Afrofunkstars: Music by Mali that will move you

And Dancing!

Registration: \$65 each. We'd like to have people buy tickets in advance so we can order the appropriate amount of food.

For more info and to register, go to:

<http://mosesmadison.org/gala/>

Please note: this is an alcohol-free event.

Volunteers Needed: Men's Shelter Monthly Breakfast Prep

The first Saturday of each month, two Reeb volunteers join two volunteers from Prairie UU to serve up a hot breakfast of scrambled eggs to the men staying in the Grace Episcopal Men's Shelter, as well as anyone who comes in off the street. Our Breakfast Crew is outstanding, but we've lost a few volunteers recently after many years of service.

Is this something that you'd like to do? With enough volunteers, it means that you'd only be committing to two Saturdays in 2019. The fun part: doing something good in our community! The hard part: getting up to be there by 5 am on a Saturday! If breakfast prep is not your thing, you could consider the tasks of coordinating volunteers or doing occasional shopping of groceries. If you're interested, contact Peggy Haack: peggyhaack@gmail.com.

Longest Night Homeless Persons' Memorial Service Friday, December 21

Madison-area Urban Ministry (MUM), Houseless individuals, members of local faith communities, and representatives from social service agencies will gather the longest night of the year to remember and honor people who died without shelter in Dane County and elsewhere this year. Everyone is welcome!

Gather at 3 pm on the Capitol Square at the intersection of East Main/South Pinckney and King Streets, by the marble bench where Dwayne Warren's body was found on June 26, 2009. A horse-drawn hearse will lead a procession around the capitol before proceeding to **First United Methodist Church for a meal light soup and bread at 4:30**, followed by the interfaith service of light and remembrance at 5 pm. **The 5 PM Interfaith Service** will include music, prayer, reflections and remembrances of our neighbors who have died this year and who were homeless..

Individuals who would like to add a name to the list of those to be remembered can do so by calling Linda at Madison-area Urban Ministry at 608-256-0906 or 608-206-6302 or names can be emailed to: linda@emum.org.

Donations of warm socks, long underwear, hats and gloves for distribution to individuals who are without a home can be taken to First United Methodist Church December 21, 9 am - 5 pm.

Membership News



Erik, Stephanie, and Brian

We welcome new Members Erik Anderson, Stephanie Arias, and Brian Gehring!

All three participated in a joining ceremony and signed the membership book November 11, 2018. Congratulations!

Mission Statement Musings

Thanks to all who participated in either congregational workshop or offered other input toward a new JRUUC mission statement. To synthesize your input into a short, easy-to-remember statement that fits our congregation's voice, we offer this first draft:

We are a faith community rooted in Unitarian Universalist principles, answering the call of love to transform ourselves and grow justice in our world.

Cottage meetings in January will invite feedback toward the version to vote on at the annual meeting in May. Please save one of the dates listed below, and look for further details in the January newsletter.

Tuesday evening, January 8

Saturday morning, January 12

Sunday after service, January 13

Thursday evening, January 17

Submitted by Mission Statement Refinement Team:
Sarah Cook and Colleen O'Hara

Rethinking Religious Education for Children and Youth

Most of you have heard by now that our Director of Religious Education (DRE), Alice Mandt, resigned her position in mid-November. We wish Alice well, and invite you to sign the card made for her by our children and youth (look for it in the foyer).

As we look around and ahead to assess the state of our Religious Education program for children and youth (RE), it is a good time to take stock of what we offer—not just for our young people—but for our families as a whole.

Short term

In the short term (the next few months), we will continue to offer RE classes during most Sunday services. Rev. Karen will provide the curriculum, and Virginia will manage the teacher schedule.

Next steps

We are already engaged in discernment regarding our congregation's mission. Now, we have the opportunity to also do some visioning around our RE program. We will hold listening sessions to discern the faith formation needs of our families. The listening sessions will not be about how to continue the current, age-segregated, curriculum-based "Sunday School" format, but if we should continue it. We will wonder together if there might be another approach altogether that would better serve our congregational and religious education missions. What if religious education is actually better served when families aren't separated on Sunday mornings? What would that look like?

Dream big

So, as we look around and ahead, we are asking all of you: those with children and those without, "What is your dream for how we as a congregation engage with each other and our faith tradition, for all ages?" Watch this space for more information about listening sessions and other ways to share your dreams and ideas for the future of RE at JRUUC.

-- Submitted by Virginia Harrison, Chair, Religious Education Committee (for children and youth), and Rev. Karen

Adult Learning and Reflecting

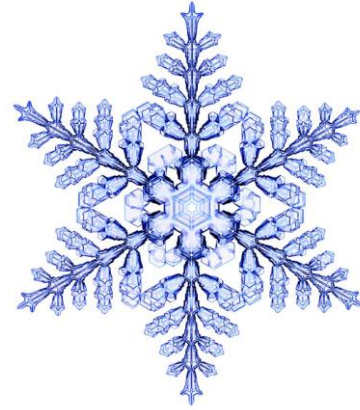
Covenant Café – a less formal way to gather and talk through some of life's big questions – will happen at **Barriques** on Park Street **Thursday, December 13 beginning at 7 pm**. Join Matt Finesilver for a lively discussion on this month's theme, mystery.

Adult Religious Exploration

The discussion sessions on *Justice on Earth: People of Faith Working at the Intersections of Race, Class, and Environment*, edited by Manish Mishra-Marzetti and Jennifer Nordstrom, began October 30. The third session will be held Tuesday, December 18 at 7 pm.

The next book for discussion will be *Daring Democracy: Igniting Power, Meaning, and Connection for the America We Want* by Frances Moore Lappe and Adam Eichen:
<https://www.uuabookstore.org/Daring-Democracy-P18213.aspx>

We'll have three discussion sessions, beginning in February. We'll place a group order for the books, which will cost \$12 each if we order 10 or more, or \$13.50 each if we order 5 to 9 (plus shipping). Please sign up on the sheets on the Religious Exploration table in the Foyer. And please let Rev. Karen know if you're interested in facilitating a session.



Administrator's Thoughts

It is fitting that our December theme is Mystery. As many of you know, Unitarian Universalism's first source is "Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to renewal of the spirit and openness to the forces which create and uphold life." **In other words, our direct experience of mystery, awe, and wonder is a source of our living UU tradition.** According to the Rev. Thandeka, a UU theologian, the vast majority of Unitarian Universalists base our religious convictions on this personal experience. Thandeka has a website and a book called *Love Beyond Belief* (<http://lovebeyondbeliefinc.org>). According to the website: "The experience of Love Beyond Belief is the actual experience of feeling connected to all of life at once: feeling awe, wonder, and love of life itself."

Many people describe this direct experience as having a feeling of oneness with all life. In fact, when we are feeling this, the part of our brains that distinguishes the self from everything else (Me from Not Me) grows quiet, showing much less activity than it would normally. Neuroscientist Dr. Andrew Newberg discovered this using brain imaging. If you want to learn more, visit <http://www.andrewnewberg.com> or read *How God Changes Your Brain: Break-through Findings from a Leading Neuroscientist*.

We encounter mystery and wonder during worship services, especially when singing, listening to live and glorious music, meditating, and participating in rituals. The beauty of our natural world is reliably awe-inspiring. Who hasn't melted into a sunset or sunrise? Right now, clouds, blue sky, snowflakes, red berries, and especially trees fill me with wonder.

Deciduous trees are a marvel this time of year because we can see all their branches and imagine their growth. But it's the conifers that show their glorious abundance – cedars, firs, junipers, pines, and spruces. I think I'm most in awe of the miracle of conifer cones.



I had an amazing experience while doing a drawing meditation with a large white pine cone. Once I began to draw the edges of each individual scale, I got into the zone, so to speak. Afterwards, I wanted to sing “Me and my Pinecone.” Really, the feeling was oneness and a supreme sense of peace. If you try this yourself, remember that the most important part of drawing meditation is to cover your drawing hand with a large piece of lightweight paper so that you cannot see what you are drawing. The finished drawing itself does not matter at all.

If you're interested in learning more about direct experience of mystery, visit the UU Mystics website, where you'll read this:

We find kindred souls who clarify our attention, move us more deeply into our hearts, and show us the way to embody and engage our spirituality in our lives.

<http://uumystics.org>

The UU Mystics also have a closed group on Facebook that you can access from their website. It includes these lovely words:

We believe that direct experience of transcending mystery and wonder is a wellspring for a life of faith. Life and the universe are replete with mystery beyond thought or expectation. Encountering it raises our spiritual awareness, inspires us to have spiritual practices, and opens us to the forces that create and uphold life.

I wish you all the awe and wonder of the turning earth, light and darkness as well as the wonderful scents of gingerbread and evergreens.

Yours in growing faith,
Elizabeth Barrett, Congregational Administrator



Sabbatical News from Rev. Karen

This is a new column for December 2018 - February 2019, as I plan and take a month of sabbatical time. Sabbatical leave is traditional for Unitarian Universalist clergy and is a time of study, reflection, rest, and renewal. A sabbatical leave is part of our letter of agreement, which says I may take a month of leave for every year I work, beginning after four years of service. Ministers typically take all of the time they are allowed at once, and I had hoped to take four months of sabbatical this year. I'm unable to do that this year, for several reasons, but I still find myself in need of a period of rest and renewal. So I'm grateful to our Board for approving my taking one month of sabbatical leave this year, and taking the rest next year. **I will be completely away from JRUUC from January 21 through February 17, 2019.**

This will be primarily a period of rest and renewal, as I spend time with my family and chosen family. I'm working with lay leaders and colleagues to ensure that worship and pastoral care continue uninterrupted during this time. Watch this column for more information in January and February.



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- ❖ *East Breeze* is published monthly by James Reeb Unitarian Universalist Congregation. To subscribe, unsubscribe, or change your mailing address, contact the newsletter editor (Elizabeth).
- ❖ Newsletter submissions may be emailed to office@jruuc.org. The **deadline for submissions** is the 20th of the month at 5 pm. Please limit articles to 200 words. Please be careful not to include sensitive information.
- ❖ Read *East Breeze* online at www.jruuc.org.

Religious Education (RE) & Childcare: Childcare & Children's RE are available most worship services.

*Karen Armina takes Mondays off and reserves Fridays for sermon-writing.