



**Rev. Mandy Beal**  
*Senior Minister*

I was recently talking (via video chat) with some friends, and the conversation turned to phrases we're tired of hearing. The educators on the call said the word "asynchronous" has worn out its welcome. "Pivot" was also on the list. But the number-one word that none of us ever want to hear again is "unprecedented." Someone said they couldn't wait for us to go back to being "precedented." Which probably isn't a word, so it was extra funny coming from an English teacher.

While it's true that nothing is technically going to be new this coming church year, I'm looking forward to it nonetheless. I'm excited about the worship plan that our Co-Directors of Music Ministry, the Worship Associates, and I have created. There are a lot of interesting things on the docket and I anticipate a good mix of sermons that will challenge and comfort our Beloved Community. Plus, we're going to start monthly "All Ages" services. These will feature RE families lighting our Chalice and a story instead of a reading. I truly believe these services will be fun and interesting to people at all stages of life.

We've hired a new Religious Education Coordinator to help us reimagine our approach to RE. Nico (they/them) is already supporting our teachers in casting this new vision and things are shaping up nicely. RE for our K-5 families will be parent-led with regular Zoom meetups. And, something that's very new in RE is moving our classes for 6-12th grade off of Sunday mornings, which allows families to share the worship experience. In this manner, our RE experience will be asynchronous, but our worship lives will become more concentrated.

Our Social and Environmental Justice work is undergoing renovations as well. BUC's varied social justice activities will now be housed in a council model with four committees: Environmental Justice, Civic Engagement, Racial Justice, and Economic Inequality. Identifying these four areas of work gives our congregation a clearer sense of what we're prioritizing this year. It also gives our SEJ committee members the opportunity to make a deep dive into the issue that pulls most at their heart.

But here's the catch: all of this is just a plan. The entire BUC community must be prepared to pivot. We'll have to change our plans in response to our changing needs. As always, your leadership team and I will keep a steady hand on the wheel as we travel this unprecedented landscape together. Our goal is to balance our need for consistency with shifting circumstances, and we'll communicate changes to you throughout the process.

During a time of anxiety and imbalance, may our love for one another and our congregation be a reliable source of strength and renewal. Let's be a rock of comfort and security, of vulnerability and safety. Maybe it be so. Amen. And Blessed Be.



**Abha Dearing**

*Co-Director of Music Ministry*

This is an unusual year, to say the least. Unprecedented, pivot, and resilient: three words that are often repeated when it comes to 2020 so far. So much of this pandemic has been unprecedented. Of course, none of us have lived through such an experience. Therefore, every single development in science, each behavior modification in the name of health, and every aspect of future planning that attempts to return us to the way it was or to “go with the flow” and accept our present, is shocking and challenging. We were so lucky and spoiled to live our lives prior to Covid with virtual autonomy and independence. Now, we are forced to pivot and change course to accommodate numerous unforeseen and outside forces. Nevertheless, we remain resilient. What choice do we have? We could actually give up. And I am sure some of us considered this. However, there is something about the indomitable human spirit which makes us keep going and helps us to become even more resourceful in finding solutions that can work for each new situation.

As we close out the summer, our Homecoming month looks different. I will prepare to lead our beloved BUC Chalice Choir for a 20th year, in safe, small, in-person and virtual rehearsals; continue to collaborate on worship for a 10th year with my constant, passionate Co-Director of Music, Steven, and our inspiring, stalwart Minister, Rev. Mandy; and help to weave meaningful music into the life of our church. Online services are not always satisfying, but I discovered that I find it motivating to stay creative to affect as many people as possible on a Sunday morning. And I feel gratitude for the steady presence of Jo, Val, Sara, and Marcia on staff.

Our kids, Rahk (age 14) and Raina (age 12), are starting 10th and 8th grades. They will be learning virtually at the start of the year. They have become accustomed to learning in this style and even though they miss their friends desperately, they seem to understand that for now, this is the best thing for them. They do feel connected to our church since they were born and brought up here. This year, the arrival of Nico in our Religious Education program has intrigued them and they are open to the adventures that lie ahead.

So this Fall, there will be more of the same. And there will be an infusion of new ideas that will combine with our traditions to make it unprecedented, allow us to pivot until we can be together safely again, and remind us to remain resilient in this ever-changing world. I wish you all well as we embark on another year at BUC in beloved community.



**Steven Dearing**

*Co-Director of Music Ministry*

In a few short weeks, we celebrate a Homecoming Sunday like never before, one where we will not be “coming home” in our sanctuary. Initially it felt sad, but it also feels exciting.

After a tattered year of RE, our youth will be working with Nico, our new RE Coordinator. The end of summer marks a time of excitement as we anticipate seeing a larger congregation on Sundays (yes, we scroll to see your faces on Zoom while Rev. Mandy is speaking). It’s thrilling knowing our science-based folks have managed to stay safe, knowing we all will come together again, stronger than before.

But even if we were doing a “normal” Homecoming service, I can attest that no two worship services are ever the same at BUC. As a person who will be marking his tenth year as your music director, I have worked for four different ministers, all with their own style. Two different Sundays with the same theme can feel totally different, depending on who’s in the pulpit and who is serving as Worship Associate.

In order to see that every congregant is served at BUC, Abha and I program different genres, from pop to classical music, planning ahead to be sure that topical themes are bolstered through music that rings a spiritual vibe.

All this variety is what keeps things fresh for us, and this is what keeps us excited to provide the highest quality in music programming that we can. The fact that we are unable to work with our awesome Chalice Choir and spunky Sound Messengers is so sad, but it has required us to morph yet again into an online music duo, bringing a variety of genres so that those coming to services continue to be fulfilled.

I am aware that change is hard for many people, but I made an intentional choice to study music because it has never been boring for me, ever. Things are always changing, from the way a certain piece sounds from day to day, to where your craft takes you. Abha is marking her twentieth year as your choir director, and as I mentioned, I am embarking on my tenth. We are proud to say that BUC is our spiritual home and that the job continues to create a spark in us after all these years.



**Nico Van Ostrand**

*Religious Education Coordinator*

Every morning these days, I make a cup of coffee, then wander over to the corner of my living room that I've designated my "office" to start my workday. At some point I make time to catch up on the news: pandemic news, racial justice news, election news, school news, work news, personal news. This ritual is so often exhausting and horrifying, but it is vital to my work as a religious education professional, and morally imperative for my growth as a Unitarian Universalist.

The tendency to become desensitized and the impulse to tune out are real. At this point, nothing is new—but the clearly heightened stress levels I witness in others and in myself indicate that desensitization does not equal peace. Tuning out does not make everything okay, for adults or for children. So nothing's new in that humanity is still experiencing a global pandemic, nationwide racial reckoning, and tense political climate. Oof.

Yet in the middle of all this, nothing's new in that church and religious education remain

important access points to community, strength, and healing. Religious education programs, like sermons, help hold children's questions and worries.

This is nothing new, and I find comfort in that.

I joined the BUC staff in mid-August (a very clear "starting new") just in time to prepare for the 2020-2021 Religious Education program year (another clear "starting new"). Religious Education at BUC is going to be different this year, not only because of me as an individual and the unique strengths and flaws I bring to the table; RE will be different because of the context of this pandemic/uprising/political climate.

Yet while the context in which this program year is beginning most certainly is new, Unitarian Universalist principles, community, and rituals are not new at all. And I find comfort in that.



**Valerie Phillips**  
*Administrator*

“Every man can transform the world from one of monotony and drabness to one of excitement and adventure.” – Irving Wallace

At first, I wasn't sure what was “old” about this pandemic. My daughter Sarah had no issue in seeing it and instantly said, “I can tell you what is tiring and monotonous! It’s everything being cancelled and turned into virtual events!” Her disappointment in this respect has been a constant, right from the beginning. I’ve watched videos and read articles where I learned a lot of people feel that way. I can acknowledge my own feelings of disappointment, sadness, worry, fear, and anger. I try not to dwell on them, though. Every day brings something new, and that’s where I try to keep my focus: looking at each day as a new opportunity.

This new church year will begin in a different way than expected. My children and I have been attending services at BUC for about 3 ½ years. Last year they were excited to be able to contribute to Water

Communion with water from our travels to Wisconsin just a few weeks prior. This year, our Wisconsin travel plans for the summer were thwarted by the coronavirus. We were looking forward to getting actual Lake Michigan water to bring back. Last year we rationalized our contribution of Lake Michigan water. It wasn’t directly from the lake, but it was processed through the City of Milwaukee water treatment and collected from the bathroom spigot of a Cousin’s Subs restaurant. Maybe next year.

My job is still very new, and will continue to be for longer than I anticipated. Events that normally would have taken place in-person have been postponed, or held in a different way with different rules. There are new ways to navigate our events and gatherings with our health and safety in mind, for congregants, friends, renters, and staff. I imagine that even returning to our “old” ways will be filled with caution and care.

My children are starting a new school year in an online learning environment. Trent is starting 10th grade, and Sarah is starting high school as a 9th grader. They both recognize their strengths and weaknesses and worry about how they will learn in this environment. It will be new and different, but I hold much faith in them and their teachers that they will do well.

The initial “excitement” of being in a pandemic has calmed. There is more about it that has become a norm. It’s becoming easier to navigate. While there are still many unknowns, there is much we have learned and can plan around. We can look for the opportunities and make adventures where we can and find excitement again.



**Marcia Mahood**  
*Rental Coordinator*

In an earlier reflection, when we were all getting used to the Covid-19 new world and still under the stay-at-home order, I think I referred to this time as The Great Pause. I recently came across an article that named our current times The Great Reconsideration. We've moved beyond the pause, and are now moving deeper into a re-examination of our lives, and I really liked the term "Reconsideration." I have heard many stories of people finally making changes in their lives that they have been considering for years. They have made the leap with a little push from this novel virus.

I've always felt that September, not January, should really be the start of the new year. September is when I've felt the greatest shifts in the rhythm of my life. Days of summer are at end, and now it is time to get serious again with

life. It's of course different this year, and the anticipation of the new church year is something to look forward to, but in a different way. I miss my hugs with my fellow BUCers and look forward to when that day will arrive. But Homecoming Sunday is coming, and it will be good to see all the faces again, even if on Zoom.

But back to The Great Reconsideration. I've been reconsidering. I have been mulling over the upcoming season, and preparing for a fall—and maybe winter—of physical distancing. It feels like I need to prepare myself psychologically for quieter times, and I am looking at the to-be-expected house projects, new knitting projects, and maybe even (finally) cleaning out the basement. And I think we really need an outdoor patio heater for the back deck. Have you ordered yours yet?

But most of all, I feel a need to take on something completely new and different. Being curious and learning something new is a great cure for the malaise that comes with this new Covid world. It gives me something to look forward to, and helps distract me from the headlines and endless news feeds and anti-maskers. I'm committed to doing new (for me) political work, and that is truly exciting. I've got other projects that are still being formulated and developed, but they give me a sense of anticipation.

What about you? What are you doing differently? What are you curious about? What new changes do you want to bring into your life?



**Sara Constantakis**  
*Communications Coordinator*

Here we are at the beginning of a new BUC year. The month of September is always the traditional start of our church year, but in the larger world, as well, September can have more meaning than January as a marker of new beginnings. Many even consider September to be the “real New Year,” and a *Wall Street Journal* piece from a few years ago talked about some of the ways September is a time of starting anew: With the start of school, families get back into routines, and that helps people get organized and set goals. New Year’s resolutions can be tougher to keep in January due to post-holiday exhaustion, and can also get derailed over the summer, making September a more attractive time to start new endeavors. People often take steps to change careers in September. And September is now a more popular time of year for weddings than the summer months.

But what does September look like in the midst of a global pandemic? Many students are returning to the virtual learning format they were thrust into back in March, which may dull the new-ness that comes with the back-to-school season. As organizations and industries continue to struggle with the economic effects of the pandemic, many people are still facing job losses or furloughs. And weddings and other celebrations have had to be postponed or downsized. (Though I’m happy to report that September weddings are still trending on the Ferndale street where I live: two different couples a few houses down the block are getting married in their next-door backyards on consecutive days in early September!) Can September still be the “real New Year” this year? How can we mark the change of season when we can’t go back to our school building, our workplace, our gym or fitness center, or our church? How can we start new endeavors with public health and safety measures limiting our activities?

The pandemic has, in some senses, made our physical worlds smaller (for now), but an unexpected silver lining to that may be that the smallest of changes—ones we might not notice under “normal” circumstances—might seem like big changes now. Maybe we try being in a different space in our home while working or watching a worship service. Maybe we designate a regular day of the week for getting takeout food from a restaurant, or switch up the day (mine is currently Friday; maybe we’ll change it to Saturday). Maybe we sign up for a new online course (there are so many possibilities!). Maybe we take a different route for our walk or bike ride, or check out some parks. Fall colors are coming! Something I’ve done in autumns past is take a daily photo of a particular tree as its colors change. Documenting such a transition might be a comforting way to satisfy a longing for change.

Not much is new on the pandemic front, but it’s still September, and I think what’s new is... us. This pandemic has changed us—as individuals, families, and organizations, as a congregation, and as a country. We’ve moved into new ways of being in the world, of communicating, of interacting, of living. We can embrace that, if we choose. As one of my favorite artists recently wrote: “Today I will always be someone slightly different than who I am tomorrow because of what I learned yesterday.” One thing isn’t new: we’re in this together. May it be so, now and at any time of year. Happy “New Year”!



Joanne Copeland  
Bookkeeper

Well, we just crossed over into our new fiscal year at BUC, on July 1. I certainly didn't notice anything new. Granted, our 2020-21 budget is a bit different, but still manageable in this unusual time. Congregants have been faithful with their pledges—thank you very much. Congregants have been generous in going beyond their pledges and making donations to keep BUC running—thank you very, very much! And thanks to all who gave to the Raise the Roof fundraiser, we now have a new roof over the Blue Door Classroom and other roof areas have been patched where needed. There we go: something new! Oh, yes, and the Commons is getting upgraded with new paint, ceiling, lighting, and carpeting that will make it feel new.

But here we are nearing our Homecoming Sunday and unable to physically attend our church home. It's been quite lonesome working in the church office with usually no one around (I do see Jason and Kirk). There's no music filling the air from the Sanctuary. There's no hearing the children laughing and running to get their doughnuts. There is no chatter among staff as we work through our daily schedules. There will be no greeting one another after the summer break like we do at our Homecoming Sunday service, our Water Communion Sunday. This is what's new. Not being together physically for the first time in BUC's history, on "opening day." I'll miss it. I miss seeing familiar faces and hearing their voices. Alas, someday...

## Make a Sign for Water Communion

Water Communion is coming up on Sunday, September 13! This year, we are inviting everyone to make a sign with water droplets, or in the shape of a water droplet, with your answer to this prompt: "I am \_\_\_\_\_". Your answer should reflect something about your identity or how you're feeling, like "I am hopeful," "I am left handed," or "I am awesome." BUC member and resident video wizard Kurtis Zetouna will be collecting digital photos of your signs and adding them to a video montage that we'll play during the service on September 13.

Please take a photo of your completed sign and ***send it to Kurtis by Thursday, September 10.*** Choose from the following options:

- 1) Upload a photo of your sign to Google Drive:  
[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/117iI7X5EE0FauviEHVNsUoHxL0e\\_LYEC?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/117iI7X5EE0FauviEHVNsUoHxL0e_LYEC?usp=sharing)
- 2) Email a photo of your sign to [Kzetouna@gmail.com](mailto:Kzetouna@gmail.com)
- 3) Text a photo of your sign to 248-491-3017
- 4) If you need to contribute something in hardcopy, you can make arrangements by calling the church office or calling Kurtis directly at 248-491-3017

## From the Board

“‘Whatever inspiration is, it’s born from a continuous I don’t know,’ the Polish poet Wislawa Szymborska observed in her magnificent Nobel Prize acceptance speech. But a central paradox of making art and making life is that while uncertainty may be the wellspring of our creative vitality—what is best in life and art often comes into being by ‘making-not-knowing,’ in artist Ann Hamilton’s lovely phrase—we are capable of creating only by hedging against the uncertainty with an arsenal of habits and routines that make it feel containable, controllable, workable. We simply cannot cope with the fundamental precariousness of it all. Every artist’s art is their coping mechanism—their makeshift raft for the slipstream of time and uncertainty that is life.... When some cataclysm in the slipstream capsizes the raft, shatters it, leaves us gasping amid the flotsam, ejected from the familiar flow of time—do we sink or sing?”

– [Maria Popova](#)

Do we sink or sing? When I ponder the idea of making art and making life in this moment of extraordinary uncertainty, the juxtaposition of sink/swim or sink/sing seems a beautiful way to look at it. I go to Pandora and play some classical guitar; it clears my mind and enables me to move forward. When I hear someone say, “I miss the way things were, and I know they will never be the same,” I feel they are perhaps not fully seeing the new possibilities that are before us. Transcending boundaries is never easy, but we have an incredible opportunity before us.

The Board has been busy coming together as a team, developing our new covenant, reviewing policy governance, holding a virtual retreat, and wondering how much longer we will be physically separated. News sources are not encouraging, but we know there is reason for hope. My faith has taught me many things, including: we are all in this together, and together we will prevail. Okay, sounds a little hokey, but sometimes hokey is good.

Finding ways to visibly live our faith, create new connections, and grow our congregation are tall orders for our new board in the midst of this pandemic. How do we develop long-term cultural and institutional change that supports our Unitarian Universalist values? If you have any thoughts on this, please let me know. In the meantime, let us begin to prepare to embrace bold new ways of being, of serving, of connecting.

I recall reading that lay leadership is a spiritual practice. Worship is the spiritual practice that unites us, so I hope to see you on Zoom on Sunday mornings. In the interim, all board members are ready to listen to you, your ideas, your concerns.



In faith,

Donna Larkin Mohr  
President, Board of Trustees

## Greetings from the Committee on Ministry

One of the roles of the Committee on Ministry (CoM) is to provide an assessment of Rev. Mandy to the Ministerial Fellowship Committee as part of a three-year process that all new ministers go through to attain final fellowship standing with the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). We are in year two of this three-year process. In addition to our assessment, one is also submitted by the Board of Trustees, along with a self-assessment by Rev. Mandy. Several key areas such as Worship, Pastoral Care, and Administration (as well as others) are explored as a tool for helping in the development of new ministers. Thank you to all who took part in this process.

The CoM meets monthly with Rev. Mandy to talk about a range of topics of concern to this beloved community. In the coming year, we will be exploring with you, the congregation, the role of the minister; the broader role of ministry in the congregation, including how we adjust to the rapid changes in our world; and what it means to be a beloved church community. Throughout the church year, the CoM will be providing opportunities to “meet” and talk—please stay tuned!

Yours in faith,

The Committee on Ministry

Max Kort, Sylvia Whitmer, Jim Shettel, and Teresa Honnold

## Rummage

I still find it funny that our monthly theme for March was RESILIENCE. Oh, cosmic irony. You got us good. We have figured out how to do a lot of stuff differently in the months since, namely, Zoom church. I wish I was here to announce that we’d figured out a way to do the fall rummage sale on Zoom (imagine!) but I am not. Alas, it is cancelled, which probably does not come as a surprise.

The rummage committee IS, however, exploring options to raise income for BUC in lieu of the sale. They will be reaching out to the congregation in the near future to gauge everyone’s interest. If you would like to learn more or volunteer to support these efforts, please contact Mary Dunn [mjd70bc@msn.com](mailto:mjd70bc@msn.com).

In the meantime, cross your fingers for spring!

—Brianna Zamborsky, Rummage Committee

## Getting to Know UU... Virtually!

The Membership Committee welcomes everyone to our Zoom class, Getting to Know Unitarian Universalism (GTKUU).

In four non-sequential classes, you will learn about BUC and how it can serve you as your spiritual home. You will explore your spirituality individually and with others. The classes will be co-led by Brianna Zamborsky and Rob Davidson.

GTKUU is an interactive, introspective, and fun experience for anyone exploring Unitarian Universalism. We have adapted the in-person curriculum to a virtual model this year. While we may be physically distanced, we will still be spiritually connected.

Classes will take place from 12:00-1:30 p.m. on the following four Sundays: October 11, October 25, November 8, and December 13. Zoom access information will be shared in the weekly update emails, on the website, and on Facebook.

If you plan on attending, please RSVP by email to Rob Davidson at [kathyd8082@gmail.com](mailto:kathyd8082@gmail.com).

## Support BUC While You Shop



Support BUC while shopping at Amazon!

AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know: same products, same prices, same service.

To set up, visit [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com), select Birmingham Unitarian Church as your charity, and Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible purchases to BUC.

Be sure to checkout at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) even if adding items to your cart through the Amazon app or Alexa.



Purchase and use gift cards for many retail and online vendors and BUC receives a percentage back on every purchase!

Register and purchase cards at [ShopWithScrip Enrollment](#)

Use the BUC enrollment number: 812A84F12914L

View the [latest scrip retailer list](#)



Link your Kroger Plus Shopper's Card to BUC, and we will earn an annual donation from a percentage of all your spending with that card.

A Shopper's Card and a digital Kroger account are needed to participate. Visit [this page](#) for more information and instructions for getting set up.

Use the BUC organization number: TL925

# Calendar of Events

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The events listed here can always be found on the home page of our [website](#), under Calendar of Events. New events are listed a week or so in advance and announced via the weekly email, Sunday service announcements, and our [BUC Community private Facebook group](#).

You can also find Zoom links for all of our events, including committee and group meetings, under the [Meeting Calendar](#) main menu on our website.

To join an event, simply click on the meeting's Zoom link. If you're not using a computer to access Zoom, you can dial into meetings with your phone by calling the number and entering the meeting ID and passcode.

## Weekly Events

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### Weekly Worship Service

Sundays | 10:30 a.m.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/196899450?pwd=RXJuNFpHdWMraENaZmFDWFVaSExqUT09>

To join by phone:

dial: 253-215-8782

meeting ID: 196 899 450

passcode: 882131

### Sunday Discussion Group

Sundays | 3:00 p.m.

<https://zoom.us/j/96501517735?pwd=Yy9NSUg3TGRHUGxjNDY5VzRtT0dzZz09>

To join by phone:

dial: 253-215-8782

meeting ID: 965 0151 7735

passcode: 047076

### Living by Heart

Mondays | 1:30 p.m.

<https://zoom.us/j/92103015538?pwd=YzVMZzFpQThhb0lFUUVhYYlk5Vy8vZz09>

To join by phone:

dial: 253-215-8782

meeting ID: 921 0301 5538

passcode: 016260

# September Events

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## Issues and Ale

Friday, September 4 | 6:00 p.m.

<https://zoom.us/j/91078070001?pwd=RkxSUERWd1NudDRyTG9jK2hlTXh5dz09>

To join by phone:

dial: 253-215-8782

meeting ID: 910 7807 0001

passcode: 766748

## Humanists of BUC

featuring Harper West

Sunday, September 13 | 7:00 p.m.

<https://zoom.us/j/98903986167?pwd=WVM0bTBrYjF1eDBIQTVQR0FVc0dRZz09>

To join by phone:

dial: 253-215-8782

meeting ID: 881 6016 5388

passcode: 285345

BUC member Harper West is a psychotherapist, author, and contributor to the bestselling book *The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump*. Harper's talk is titled "An Interpretation of Donald Trump Based on Humanistic Psychology and Mary Trump's Book *Too Much and Never Enough*"

## Confronting Racism

Tuesday, September 15 | 7:00 p.m.

<https://zoom.us/j/93729325877?pwd=MIJkMUNIZE4zQmtrT3VNbHJ2Ti8xdz09>

To join by phone:

dial: 253-215-8782

meeting ID: 937 2932 5877

passcode: 570711