

Volume 37
Edition 12
December
2019



CROSSROADS



Bull Run Unitarian
Universalists

Rev. Charlotte's Word-Weavings

Topophilia and Ministry

In mid-November, I attended two back-to-back events: my very first Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA) Fall Conference and then the Harper's Ferry Ministerial Study Group retreat (also a first). They were very different from each other, but it was a nice pairing of theological reflections on where we are in UUism today.

The title given to LREDA's Fall Con was "Theologies of Suffering and Wholeness: Companions in Liberation." LREDA is the forward edge of liberation in Unitarian Universalism. Religious educators are fostering wholeness, resilience and grace as we grapple with the harm still being caused by the system of white supremacy culture. Dismantling white supremacy is hard work. We make mistakes and cause further harm to people whose DNA holds centuries of harm. It is only through becoming more deeply equipped with the tools of a faithful life that we can grow into the love ethic that is central to who we are as Unitarian Universalists.

Our Sunday worship services are not the only place where we engage in sacred education. In fact, Angus McLean, one of the giants of Universalist religious education, said that the "heart of the church is in the home." What rituals do you do at home to heal yourself from the slings and arrows of life? How do you live your faith every day?

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(Word-Weavings, continued from page 1)

This brings me to topophilia – love of place. Most of us have special places in our lives that we seek out when we want to rest, recuperate or rejuvenate. It might be home, it might be a place in nature, it might be a particular set of friends or family. It might even be poetry or music. It's different for each of us. Topophilia “encapsulates the pleasantly varied relationships we have with particular bits of the world both as individuals and as participants in cultures with long histories” says Edward Relph in his blog in which he discusses Yi-fu Tuan's 1974 book by that name.

The minister's retreat theme was “ministry with a sense of place.” The idea was that by cultivating a sense of place, each of us will be more grounded and better equipped to minister in this time of climate crisis; fear-mongering; cruelty toward migrants; racial, income and health disparities; and cultural shifts and challenges within UUism (within local congregations and in our national organizations).

Each of the ministers in attendance shared a reflection on the place of their ministry. One point that was raised is the difference between *space* and *place*. Space is abstract; it becomes a place when it develops meaning for us after the space has attracted our attention. Meaning makes all places sacred, all places holy. One colleague pointed out that crossroads are equivalent to holy ground and that UUism is ministry at crossroads.

In another reflection, it was shared that the church is each other, not a building or a particular place. A question we might ask is “How is our own history of space and place mirrored in where we do ministry?”

Some other questions to consider as we continue our vision process this year:

- What does our capital go to? – Buildings? Mission? Something else?
- How does the building function – as tool? as home? as symbol?
- What do we want to see in the world?

Here's what a vision statement answers: How do we as a congregation see our ministry in the world?

To answer that question, it is helpful to have an idea what is BRUU's ministry as a sense of place.

May your days and nights be blessed, *Rev. Charlotte*



P.S. I am still looking for people to participate in the Christmas Eve service on December 24th at 7:00 pm. If you'd like to be a reader, please get in touch with me via minister@bruu.org or the Worship Committee at worship@bruu.org. We also need greeters and ushers

December 2019 Sermon Descriptions

December 1: *Seek the Spirit of a Child* (Rev. Charlotte) – The winter holiday season is ready-made for inhabiting our inner child's spirit. The worship service explores being in a place of awe and wonder about the world and the life we get to live. Service will include a child dedication ceremony for Lennox Link.

December 8: *Black Holes: Science and Spirituality* (Ellen Badgley & Rev. Charlotte) – In April, scientists shared the first-ever photographic images of a black hole. Our service explores the science these enigmatic phenomena of the Universe and the spiritual significance of our quest to know what they are.

December 15: *Music Sunday: Holiday Journeys* (Annease Hastings) – A multigenerational holiday music service exploring journeys and the holidays. FMI contact music@bruu.org

December 22: *Festival of Lights* (Rev. Charlotte) – Hannukah is a minor, but beloved holiday in the Jewish calendar. We learn more about the history and meaning behind the rituals. We will light Memorial candles for those who have died in 2019.

December 24 (Tuesday) at 7:00 pm: *Christmas Eve Service*

Candlelight Service (Rev. Charlotte) – Through readings, stories, carols and candle light, we celebrate the holiday of Christmas.

December 29: *TBD* (Star and Janette Muir) – It's become an annual tradition for Star and Janette to lead worship on the last Sunday of the calendar year. What wisdom and rituals will they share this year? You'll have to come worship that morning to find out! FMI contact the Muirs.

The Seventh Annual Craft Fair is Almost Here!

The annual craft fair will be here in just a couple of weeks! Come and shop for your holiday gifts from our many crafters and vendors.

The craft fair hours are Friday, December 6 from 6-9 pm— the same time as Manassas 'First Friday'. On Saturday and Sunday (Dec 7 & 8) our hours are from 11-2pm. Saturday is the Manassas parade. Come cheer on BRUUsers in the parade and warm up and shop with us afterwards.

This is a BRUU fundraiser and as such we need people to come shop to make this a success. You can help by sharing information about the craft fair with your friends and family and encouraging them to come. Entrance is always free. For more info contact Christine Sunda at sundas3@aol.com.

BRUU EMERGENCY FOOD PANTRY NEWS

Announcing Sherman Food Pantry Matching Grant

Once again, during this season of giving, the Sherman Family has donated a \$3500 matching grant to help fund the BRUU Pantry. The Sherman Family will match dollar for dollar all donations to the Sherman Food Pantry Challenge from now until all the funds are matched or the end of January, whichever comes first! Please make your checks to BRUU with Sherman Food Pantry Challenge on the memo line. Thank you, Mary!!

Martha Muirhead and the Food Pantry Elves



BRUU Community Assistance Fund

Do you know that BRUU has a “Community Assistance Fund”?

The Community Assistance Fund (CAF) is one of the outreach ministries of the congregation. It provides financial assistance to people experiencing hardships, helping BRUU members and people living in Prince William County community. As a downtown church, we get many requests for help from those in need. Typical requests for help include making one-time payments to keep families safely in their homes through rental and utility assistance, or other immediate financial crises. Tina Cox, our office assistant is the front line in fielding these requests. People may receive funds once but not more than twice each year.

Occasionally, members of the congregation let the minister know that they need help making ends meet. Funds are provided in these cases at the minister’s discretion.

The money for community assistance comes from two sources: a small amount is included in the congregational budget each year and the majority of funds come from individual donations to a designated reserve fund account.

Currently, there is one special collection for the CAF during the Christmas Eve service. The monies received from this offering only go so far and the budgeted amount is minimal. If you would like to make a donation to the CAF, you may write a check or make a direct bank payment to BRUU with CAF in the memo line.

BRUU AUCTION A GREAT SUCCESS!

What a wonderful time of fellowship we had at the recent BRUU Auction. This year we reached an all-time high with an approximate total of \$38,800. Our highest bidders for the evening were Dianne and David Lane (who also engaged in cross-continental auction prep and bidding - keeping track of things for the Pace-Sexton family). Contributing the items that drew the most bids were Art and Martha Muirhead - due in large part to their wonderfully exotic events that include a Brazilian feast, an Indian meal with amazing photos, and a party with horses and a swimming pool.

A big thank you to everyone who contributed to the event's success. Special thanks to Jessie Thompson for organizing the complicated process of feeding so many people; to Mike Freeland and David Lane for keeping our beverages refreshed; to the auctioneers who kept things moving along, urging us on at just the right moments; to Martha Walsh and the set-up crew for creating a colorful, festive space that inspired many bids; to Henry Hastings, Terrie McClure and the database crew for managing the accounting and money issues; to Nina Lomax and Bev Reusser our friendly greeters; and to those who contributed a hand or two in the ongoing kitchen detail and final clean up. So many generous spirits it takes to make this event a success!

Now for the nitty gritty - please be sure to pay your tab within this next month so that we can close out the calendar year with a fully paid auction. Also, if you can't attend an event you have purchased, consider inviting newcomers to take your place. If you're planning an event and there is a cancellation, also remember our new to BRUUers!

This is an awesome community of such kind souls.

Janette Muir, your grateful Auction Czarina



FROM ANNEASE

"Christmas Journeys" Dec 15

This is our annual multigenerational, holiday music service. We'll reflect on the journeys taken by shepherds and magi, on journeys we make to visit family and friends and on journeys of self-discovery which occur in this season of miracles and questioning.

Annease Hastings, Music Director

Christmas Carol Sing-along

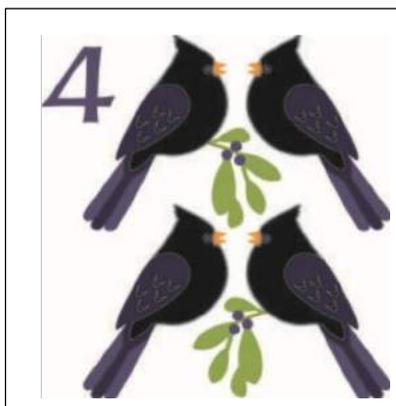
December 21st, 1:00 – 4:00 in the Sanctuary

Join us for a good old-fashioned Christmas carol sing-along! Bring your voices, bring your instruments — or just come to listen! We'll take turns choosing our favorite songs.

Point of Contact: Martin Crim and Kelly Muzzin



The Fourth Day of Christmas: An Evening of Holiday Music



Old and New

Can't get enough holiday music? Neither can we! Join us Saturday, December 28 at 7:00 pm for a concert featuring classic Christmas carols performed by local soprano Edith Mazur, *plus* a program of holiday favorites – old and new – offered by our own BRUU musicians!

Goodwill offerings to benefit BRUU gratefully accepted.
Point of Contact: Kelly Muzzin



Dec 1 Children's choir 11:15-11:45
Youth choir 11:30-12:15

Dec 8 Children's choir 11:15-11:45
Youth choir 11:30-12:15

Many Waters Book Club, 8 AM
at Grounds Central Station

Dec 15 Dress rehearsal all choirs
From 10-12

Junior and Senior High Cookie
Bake, starts approximately 12
noon in BRUU kitchen



If you're sick, please ...

focus on getting better. Stay home from BRUU. Yes, we know, you love our community and can't bear to miss a Sunday. Find someone to replace you if you have a duty or role to play that morning. Remember that we have people of all ages at BRUU who are immune compromised.

If you want to show your love for BRUU, get a flu shot, if not for yourself then to avoid becoming a carrier who might infect someone else. We'll still be here the following week.



In case you haven't yet noticed this sanctuary improvement, check it out! Please, no tap dancing on newly refinished floor!

White Elephant and 50/50 BRUU Crafter's Tables

We are having a white elephant table this year at the craft fair and are looking for your upscale donations. Please bring us your donations starting on Sunday, December 1st through Thursday the 5th. Please bring your donations to the Fellowship Hall and put them on the stage only.

We will also need help pricing and selling as well as setting up and breaking down for the craft fair itself.

In addition, we are having a BRUU Crafter's Table. If you have crafts you've made you and you want to split the sale with BRUU, please contact Dorothy Greenhouse. For more info or to offer to help please contact Christine Sunda at sundas3@aol.com.

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Just As Long As I Have Breath

Series Title: First Principles

Column Title: Love

"We forgive ourselves and each other and begin again in love." From A Litany of Atonement, by Rev. Robert Eller-Isaacs, #637 in [*Singing the Living Tradition*](#)

In my speech accepting BRUU's vote to make me President, I spoke of stewardship, accountability, planning for a range of possible futures, vision, living our values, and love. This is the sixth and last in the series, on the subject of love.

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In my previous column, I wrote, “BRUU has changed its Board and its committee structure many times, but it has never produced the ideal structure and never will, because each structure serves only the present needs.” Every structure, and every change of structure, has exasperated someone (often several someones), but we love this community, so we put up with the less than perfect, less than optimal, and sometimes less than fully functional structures we build for ourselves.

Because we love this community, we donate our time, talent, and treasure to sustain it. We see the devotion of others, and let that spur us to greater love, commitment, and generosity. This love is a bit like romantic love, because we sometimes let it blind us to reality. I don’t advocate steely-eyed realism, but maybe a mix between romanticism and realism.

I ask you to remain aware of BRUU’s needs, including its physical, structural, and financial needs. At the same time, I ask that you not become distanced but instead see the value that BRUU brings to you and to our community and to the world. Let us forgive ourselves and each other and begin again in love.

Martin Crim, President, BRUU Board of Directors

At its November 21 meeting, your Board of Directors:

- Discussed the pros and cons of skipping the October meeting.
- Discussed the shared reading we did in lieu of meeting in October, chapters 5 and 6 of Dan Hotchkiss, “Governance and Ministry.” One of the president’s favorite passages was this: “A congregation’s mission is its unique answer to the question, ‘Whose lives do we intend to change and in what way?’”
- Corrected payment of staff to comply with current federal law.
- Discussed canvass strategy, such as avoiding a second call for contributions, focusing on removing obstacles, and building an inspirational budget.
- Tasked Treasurer Terrie McClure and Immediate Past President Art Muirhead to work on updating the Knowledge Base on BRUUnet.
- Discussed the benefit we could realize from contacting every member and friend *outside* the annual canvass.
- Discussed an attempt to defraud BRUU of \$4500 and the need to close our existing account at BB&T and set up a new one. Thanks for catching that, Henry! (The opening of our new account was accomplished the following day).
- Tasked Vice President Randy Freed with gathering information from one of our tenants, the New City Fellowship, about their reduction from two services to one, as that might relate to a reduction in rent.
- Tasked Immediate Past President Art Muirhead to create a plan for educating, communicating with, and recruiting delegates to the UUA General Assembly,
- Tasked Vice President Randy Freed with gathering information from one of our tenants, the New City Fellowship, about their reduction from two services to one, as that might relate to a reduction in rent.
- Tasked Immediate Past President Art Muirhead to create a plan for educating, communicating with, and recruiting delegates to the UUA General Assembly, focusing on the new scholarship for a young adult to attend.
- Referred a set of financial policies to the Finance Committee for a recommendation.
- Postponed to December discussion of a shared reading.
- Postponed to December discussion of the potential capital campaign.
- Postponed to December discussion of goal-setting for communications policies.

This Glass: Half Empty or Half Full?

Hosting Rev. Kiyimbe

by Kathy Sobrio

Over the November weekend when Uganda's Rev. Mark Kiyimbe was in Manassas as BRUU's guest speaker, my husband and I had the pleasure of hosting him with bed-n-meals and getting to know him. What an adventure! First, I'm sure he would want you to know how grateful he was for the many blessings BRUUers heaped on him -- from our standing ovation at the end of his sermon to our Split-the-Plate contribution for his work in Uganda, from Tom Cooke's gift of lunch for Rev. K and several BRUUers, to Liesl Main's bagful of lesson plans on a range of topics that will help the teachers of his school.

Uganda is lucky to have a man as dynamic as Rev. Kiyimbe. He leads its only UU church -- 150 parishioners who are 100% dedicated to saving lives and educating poor kids in their country. Financially they underwrite the never-ending costs of an orphanage for 45 kids, a Safe House for gays and lesbians, and a school. Rev. K manages them all. It is more than a full-time job, but the orphanage and Safe House are a matter of life and death. In a country where the rank-n-file person thinks it's okay to kill homosexuals and anyone who helps them, the UU Safe House offers a haven against daily fear.

As for the UU orphanage, I learned a valuable lesson from Rev. K. I pointed out to him that America has phased out orphanages in favor of a foster home system wherein the State pays people to raise foster children. "That doesn't always work out so well for the kids," I said. "I knew a woman who took in foster children for only one reason -- the money -- and then made the kids do her housework and babysit her kids. 'Free labor and a check besides,' she used to brag." I expressed my disdain for her, but Rev. K said, "Don't look at it that way. From the foster child's point of view, (s)he may never have had it so good. Now (s)he has clothes, a coat, food and a bed, maybe for the first time. We saw this at my orphanage. A couple of British women came to visit and criticized us for giving the kids beans over cornmeal mush every day for lunch. I told them, 'Our kids are grateful for it. It's more than they had out in the jungle where they had *nothing* to eat.' In fact, kids in villages with families think our orphan kids are lucky. You can't assume something is bad because it's not perfect. You have to look at how much progress you've made from where you used to be."

His response made me realize that Americans grouse a lot -- or at least we're dissatisfied -- because we focus on the end goal, the ideal, not where we started from. We measure how well life is going by how far we are from the ideal that is our end goal. It's more about what we *don't have* yet or what we *haven't achieved* yet than about basking in the glow of how far we've come.

The old saying "Is the glass half empty or half full?" reminds us that there are two ways of looking at everything. Would most Americans say a glass is half *empty*? Why half empty and not half full? Is it because we live in a land of plenty and a culture of competition? Our land of plenty allows us the luxury of setting our goals high, and our land of competition leads us to focus on how far we still have to go before reaching goal. Reaching less suggests we "lost". But Rev. K comes from a land of scraping by just to survive. It leads to a different measuring stick. They don't have the luxury of setting high goals as we do with so much available to us. In Uganda, progress -- or "winning" -- is defined by where you started.

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This is Thanksgiving time, a season that celebrates the attitude of gratitude. Since Rev. K's visit, I've found it a relief to bask in the quiet joy of recognizing that all around me, most of the glasses of people around me are half full, and some are even more than half full. May you appreciate your own efforts, based on where you started from. Happy Thanksgiving!

December 2019

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|-------|----------------------------|-------|---|
| 12/03 | UupBeats, 12:45 P | 12/17 | UupBeats, 12:45 P |
| 12/04 | Tao Te Ching, 10:45 A | | PFLAG, 7 P |
| | Seasoned Souls, noon | 12/18 | Tao Te Ching, 10:45 A |
| 12/06 | Craft Show | | Grief Support, noon |
| 12/07 | Craft Show | 12/19 | Master Naturalists, 6:30 P |
| 12/08 | Craft Show | | Board Meeting, 7 P |
| | Finance Committee, 11:15 A | 12/20 | USDA Food Pantry, 9:30 A |
| | BRIC, 11:30 A | 12/21 | Carol sing-along, 1 P |
| 12/09 | SASS, 1:30 P | 12/22 | Senior to Senior Tea |
| | Master Naturalists, 6:30 P | | Membership, 11:15 A |
| 12/10 | Food Pantry, 9:30 A | | RE Committee, 11:15 A |
| | Personnel Committee, 7 P | 12/24 | Food Pantry, 9:30 A |
| 12/11 | Tao Te Ching, 10:45 A | | Christmas Eve Service, 7 P |
| 12/12 | Worship Committee, 7 P | 12/28 | 4 th Day of Christmas Music, 7 P |
| 12/13 | Nothin Fancy Concert, 8 P | | |
| 12/15 | Crane Making, 11 A | | |
| | Soup Sunday | | |
| | Program Council, 11:30 A | | |

NOTHIN FANCY playing at BRUU

Six-time award winner – Society for the Preservation of Bluegrass Music Association (SPGBMA)
– **Entertaining Group of the Year**

Friday, December 13, 2019
7:00pm doors open, 8:00pm
showtime

Candle-light Christmas Eve Service, December 24th at 7 pm

This year, there will be one Christmas Eve service. Format will be readings, stories, music and carols appropriate to the holiday. Join us for hot chocolate and cookies afterwards in the Fellowship Hall.

- ◆ If you have a favorite Christmas story or reading, please send it to Rev. Charlotte (minister@bruu.org).
- ◆ If you'd like to be a reader during the service, please contact Rev. Charlotte.

Volunteers are also needed to donate and/or serve the cookies and hot chocolate.

From the DRE...



Our Senior YoUUth kicked off “Senior Tea” season last month, and a great time was had by all. Kudos to the youth leadership prior to the tea, and to the entire group who worked together effortlessly preparing the room and the treats.

During a recent lesson on Acceptance, the Explorers (Ages 3-7) traced their bodies to create full sized self-portraits.

Thank You to Heather Berthold and Colin Credle for your advising skills. Dean Luman, a co-leader, reports “Heather and Colin asked me to sit in with them on their first session leading. The agenda for the day was ambitious and they were meeting some of the kids for the first time. They did an amazing job focusing on what was important. I saw that the kids all enjoyed themselves and felt safe with Heather and Colin in order to share personal statements about their beliefs. They really didn’t need me that day, but I enjoyed it and am glad they have joined the Senior Youth team.”

Don’t miss the Youth Holiday Cookie Sale fundraiser! All proceeds will supplement the cost of two retreats - important pieces of their faith discovery this year. Each tray is \$15, and will contain three dozen assorted, delicious home-made treats! You can pre-order in fellowship hall after service until December 8th, pick up is Dec. 15 or Dec. 22nd.

Kristin Worthington, Director of Religious Education



Questers classmates (Ages 8-10) explore the concept of “strength” by testing a variety of nails.

(photos courtesy of Kristin Worthington)