



December 2023  
Volume 41, Issue 12

# Crossroads



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The monthly BRUU Newsletter



## December Sermon Descriptions

**December 3:** *Heretics: The Polish Unitarian Brethren* (Rev. Charlotte Lehmann) – During this morning’s service we’ll explore the early roots of Unitarian Universalism in Poland in the 16th century and will include photos from the Polish Unitarian Heritage Pilgrimage that Rev. Lehmann experienced in September.

**December 10:** *Sharing the Light* (David Maley & BRUU Choir) – Our annual December Music Service explores the many faith traditions that celebrate holidays during this time of year by “sharing the light” – including through the ritual lighting of candles – of hope, love, and community. This is a multigenerational (MG) service of song and reflection.

This month’s 2nd Sunday Share-the-Plate recipient is Beacon House, D.C. (<https://beaconhousedc.org/>).

*Note: There is no Religious Education programming this morning, but the Nursery is open for those who need it.*

**December 17:** *Solstice Grieving* (Rev. Charlotte Lehmann & Melissa Mullinax) – The shortest day and longest night of the year is coming up on 12/21. This morning, we will mark the Winter Solstice with a “solstice grieving” worship service. Similar to “Blue Christmas” or “Longest Night” services, this morning we will acknowledge the darkness in life and make space for our sorrows even in the midst of the holidays and festivities.

The 3rd Sunday Share-the-Plate benefits BRUU’s Community Assistance Fund.



## December Sermon Descriptions, Continued

**December 24:** *Christmas Eve Morning* (Rev. Charlotte Lehmann) – During this multigenerational (MG) service, we will experience the Christmas Story as a no-rehearsal pageant and sing traditional Christmas carols. Come join in the spirit of the holiday! Please note: This 10 a.m. Sunday worship service is our only service this year. *Also note: There is no Religious Education programming this morning, but the Nursery is open for those who need it.*

**December 31:** *Puzzling Life* (Jannette and Star Muir) – Long time puzzle enthusiasts, Janette and Star invite you to a service on the metaphorical framework and the importance of encountering life's enigmas. From health benefits of mental activity to viewing our search for meaning as a series of changing and challenging puzzles, we hope to explore how puzzles are woven into the fabric of life, identify strategies for "solving" life's brainteasers, and share what new puzzles we face in the transition to 2024. When is a service not a service? Come find out!

This is a multigenerational (MG) worship experience. There will be a 5th Sunday Special Collection to benefit Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice (UUSJ) – <https://uusj.net/wp1/>.

*Note: There is no Religious Education programming this morning, but the Nursery is open for those who need it.*



## Minister's Column

### *Sharing the Light During Troubling Times*

Rev. Charlotte

As we will all see and hear during our annual December Music Service, lighting candles and fires is a common spiritual practice, especially at this time of year in the Northern Hemisphere when the winter solstice (December 21) brings about the shortest day and the longest night of the year. This sharing of light and warmth are often seen as symbolic of a larger message of community, of love, and of hope.

This December, I need to feel part of a loving and hope-filled community. For me it is both a personal need, as I continue to grieve the death of my mother in mid-October, and a need in relation to our contemporary world and the events taking place far, far away that nevertheless impact us all.

The war between Russia and Ukraine, now nearly two years since its inception, continues unabated. There appears to be no end in sight. And our own government is so embroiled in its own internal conflicts that it seems we, the United States, may not be much support to the Ukrainians, at least for the time being.

With the invasion by Hamas of southern Israel on October 7th, our attention has shifted to the Middle East and this new war. It is heart-breaking. And very, very complicated. And very much being debated and born-out in our communities here in the United States, including very impolitely in the halls of the U.S. Congress. Many of us have very strong opinions about the

# Minister's Column, Continued

situation. I have seen tremendous pain expressed by my UU colleagues on both sides of the conflict. So much so that social media moderators have had to shut down group spaces.

I sincerely hope that we at BRUU don't experience that level of distress!

All of this rancor and turmoil begs questions about how we can inform ourselves of the facts as well as honor our deep and strong emotional reactions at the same time. How can we learn as well as support those in need? What can we do to find our collective way towards a peaceful settlement of the issues involved?

I don't necessarily have any answers, but I am willing to hold an open heart and listen compassionately for the pain being expressed.

I wish we could put into action the kind of effort that has been shown to members of our congregation who have needed help during difficult and challenging circumstances. That concerted work towards a necessary goal has been a godsend to those in need.

Thank you for being part of our caring community!

Blessings to all,

Rev. Charlotte

# From the President's Desk

Dear fellow-congregants,

Thanksgiving Day is uniquely American celebration that is different for many people depending on our relation to the United States, so, however you spent this day, I hope it was a good one.

Coming from Ecuador, my mother and I didn't "do" Thanksgiving, until my girlfriend and I invited my mom and siblings to our place for our first celebration. Because nowadays the whole family gathers at the home of a dear family member, we (my husband, mother and I) get to enjoy the meal and company and just help with the cleanup. Definitely, I have much for which to be thankful.

Riding home later with Randy at the wheel and Mom fast asleep in the back seat, my thoughts turned to our beloved congregation. I recalled how we all weathered the pandemic, enduring the numbers of lives lost and missing the simple act of interacting face-to-face. How we struggled with each step forward, considering and debating important decisions, such as ways to share information while respecting individual decisions about masks, and when to open partially or fully. We wanted everyone to be and feel safe. Simultaneously, politics began to devolve, making it difficult to navigate gatherings of family and friends. There's no denying that the past 4 years impacted how we relate to stress and anger, even as the pandemic receded. We learned that congregations are not immune to the impact of frustration and fear, even in the face of making the best decisions we could. I'm grateful that BRUU can approach these holidays still intact, while still recognizing the need for change in the world, and often ourselves.

Sitting at my desk later that evening, I revisited my reasons for agreeing to be BRUU's President and I set out my goals on paper. Now, as we approach the new year, I want to share them with you, hoping to see what you think. They are:

- To foster a BRUU culture of safety and service through transparency, clarity of purpose and resolution of conflict.
- To lead and model a collaborative and covenantal relationship for and

# From the President's Desk, Continued

among the board, staff, congregants, and visitors by providing opportunities for us to grow and thrive in right relations with one another; and

- To promote satisfying engagement, effectiveness and well-being among our member-volunteers and community volunteers, through regular connection, training and tools to support our volunteer efforts, service recognition and success celebrations throughout the year.

If you are interested in these thoughts or have your own to share, I'd love to hear from you. In the meantime, I'm asking you do the following:

- Engage in congregational activities and programs that interest or excite you.
- Speak up and join in. We need your voice and ideas so that our beloved community can grow and thrive. If you want to help out with any project, please take advantage of learning opportunities and tools available for the role you undertake.
- Be sure to set your boundaries, so you don't experience burnout; and ask for help when you need it!

I'm posting the Board Meeting summary in a separate box called Board Matters. You may read the full Board minutes in KnowledgeBase via access to BRUUnet once they've been approved by the Board.

In the meantime, please feel free to contact me at [President@BRUU.org](mailto:President@BRUU.org) if you have any questions or comments to share.

Together for BRUU,

Angie Carrera, President, Board of Directors

# Board Matters

*The Board meets the third Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the BRUU Conference Room and available on Zoom.*

- Voted on the Search Committee's **recommendation for the Settled Music Director position.**
- Reviewed the Nov. 12 meeting with the **Partners for Sacred Places** representative on their grant opportunity and feasibility study for a Capital Campaign focused on infrastructure needs.
- Prepared for the Nov. 19 **Reorganization Listening Session** with CoSM (Committee on Shared Ministry), in advance of the Dec. 3 Town Hall.
- Requested more information in response to the Communication Committee's **Proposal** to install a Foyer Monitor (screen) to promote greater outreach.
- Changed timeline for the **Security Camera** proposal so a new champion-volunteer will begin the negotiations with vendors in the spring.
- Approved a **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for BRUUnet Access**, clarifying our process for adding folks to BRUUnet.
- Will finalize final **FY25 budget recommendations**, based on Strategic Plans, to the Finance Committee by the December meeting.
- **Annual Congregational Meeting** has been reserved following the service on Sunday, June 2, so please note your calendars.

## POSTSCRIPTS:

- The President has discussed the **Ministerial Assessment** with BRUU's Personnel Chair and will begin the process for the assessment expected to take place in January.
- The Board has been informed that the Treasurer and Finance Committee Chair will provide necessary documents to the CPA/EA who will perform a **Financial Review** for FY23, which was last done in FY18 by this same firm.

*After approval by the Board, the full minutes of each meeting are available in BRUUnet KnowledgeBase.*



# Chrysalis Concert Series: Nothin' Fancy

Come see the internationally renowned group, featuring Chris Sexton, performing their unique combination of storytelling, harmony, and passionate energy. Winner of multiple awards and accolades, Nothin' Fancy is an amazing combination of quality, rhythm and fun. *Remember this is part of the Chrysalis Concert series, and is a fund-raiser for BRUU.*

COME FIND OUT THE SECRET SONG! The BRUU Auction item to pick a song for Nothin' Fancy to perform during this concert was won by Bill Stejskal. What deep theme will he unearth? What havoc will he unleash? Come join us on December 16 and find out!



Nothin' Fancy was formed as a bluegrass band in 1994 to compete in a bluegrass competition. Ever since then, they have grown in popularity, released 11 full-length albums, and continue to perform at festivals all across the United States, Canada, and Norway including the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, TN, the Lincoln Center in New York City, and the Birchmere in Alexandria, Virginia. They have successfully hosted their own Nothin' Fancy Bluegrass Festival every year since 2001 in Buena Vista, Virginia.

You think you know bluegrass? You haven't seen Nothin' yet!

Here is the link to purchase tickets: <https://event.auctria.com/a71fe18e-d671-4969-b041-dc5ac1b811e3/>

# A Discussion on Affordable Housing in Manassas

**When:** December 7, 7:00-8:30pm

**Where:** Bull Run Unitarian Universalists, 9350 Main Street (corner of Church and Main), Manassas VA 20110

**Who:** Del. Michelle Maldonado, members of City Council, local residents

**Topic:** What is the city's responsibility to ensure there is enough affordable housing? How much is "enough"? Should the city have enough housing to match the number of jobs in the city that pay 80% or less of AMI?

*Plus:*

- Where should the city plan for new affordable housing? Should Manassas partner with PW County and Manassas Park to plan for housing that might be in any one of the three jurisdictions?
- Should the city focus exclusively on rental housing, or also subsidize housing to help address wealth inequality and help low-wealth households start increasing wealth through projected increase in housing equity?
- What barriers can be removed or incentives added to make affordable / workforce housing easier to build?

**All are invited. Bring your ideas and questions.**

Free, of course.

*Organized by the Social Justice Committee at Bull Run Unitarian Universalists (BRUU)*

## WHO CAN AFFORD TO LIVE IN THE CITY?

### Manassas City Government Job Listings

Based on Terwilliger Center and National Low Income Housing Coalition's methodologies, NVAHA conducted a small scale wage and occupations analysis to determine who can afford to live in the city. The job listings were gathered on September 7, 2023.

**36.84% Unable to Afford FMR 1 Bedroom**



**63.16% Unable to Afford FMR 2 Bedroom**



**0 qualifies for a mortgage with 10% downpayment**



Police Officer



Water & Sewer Worker



Public Safety Comm.



Police



Airport Maintenance



Walmart Service Ass.

# ***Use the BRUU Sanctuary Infrared Camera to Identify Opportunities to Save Money and Reduce Your Carbon Footprint***

John Sunda

The BRUU Sanctuary Infrared Camera is Available for Loan to Inspect Your Home for Air leaks and Poor Insulation.

*For more information, inquire at the Coffee Sales table or contact John Sunda (sundajb@gmail.com)*

Several years ago the BRUU Sanctuary purchased a portable infrared camera with the intent of loaning it out to BRUU members to help them reduce energy use by identifying areas where energy is being lost through the envelope of their homes.

During the winter and summer months when the difference in temperature between the interior and exterior of your home is greatest, this camera is useful for locating air leaks and missing, defective, and poorly distributed insulation. The camera can also be useful to identify wet/damp spots where active water leaks are suspected.

The infrared camera can be reserved, signed out, and returned at the coffee sales table or by contacting John Sunda. A small donation to help defray the purchase cost is appreciated. A sheet including basic operating instructions is included with the camera. Consult John Sunda with more detailed technical questions.

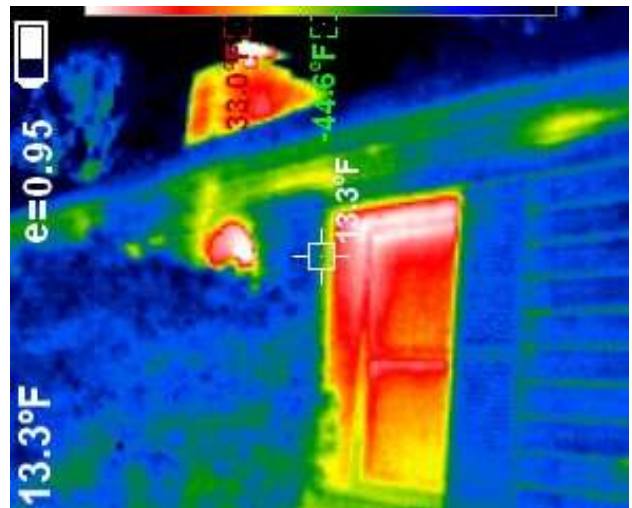


Image captured by the BRUU Infrared Camera

## **See Something? Report It!**

Notice anything in or around the BRUU building that needs maintenance or repair?

Please report it by using this link:

[www.bruu.org/www2/building-repair-request-form](http://www.bruu.org/www2/building-repair-request-form)

This will provide a quick opportunity for you to contact the Building & Grounds folks and alert them to the situation that needs attention.

It takes a village (aka congregation)!

## **BOOK GROUP**

Open to all readers, that meets the **3rd Monday** of almost every month – by Zoom – at 3:30pm.

Book selections are eclectic and made by the democratic process, with consideration to availability at the public library, download, and/or local bookstores (particularly McKay's Used Books!). The group is not limited to BRUU members – one of our participants joins us from Portland, ME.

If you are interested in joining the discussions of an unconventional group of readers then contact Susan Gregorio  
[SusanG100@comcast.net]



## BRUU Rental Space Available Immediately

Do you have a small business or studio need? What about your friend or neighbor? BRUU has an immediate availability of an office space on the 3rd floor off of the chapel space.

Formerly used as instructional space for piano lessons, the space can be used for many passive uses. Rent is \$275/month, and year-long leases are preferred. Credit check and security deposit are required. Please have interested parties contact [vicepresident@bruu.org](mailto:vicepresident@bruu.org).

## PASTORAL CARE

One of our strengths as a congregation is how we care for one another.

Please reach out to us at [pastoralcare@bruu.org](mailto:pastoralcare@bruu.org) and let us know if there is a need within our community, so that we may coordinate with caring volunteers within BRUU

# THE PUZZLER

## November's Puzzler

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Here are the answers for last month's connections puzzle, to find four themes among the 16 entries:

1. Justice 2. Tarot 3. Chalice Lighting 4. World Parliament  
5. Chime 6. Equity 7. Animal Blessing 8. Article 2  
9. Evil 10. Joys & Sorrows 11. Sung Benediction, 12. Relations  
13. Observatory 14. Compassion 15. CUUPS 16. UU Nutshell

Theme 1: Second Principle (1. Justice, 6. Equity, 14. Compassion, 12. Relations)

Theme 2: Recent BRUU Services (2. Tarot, 4. World Parliament, 7. Animal Blessing, 9. Evil)

Theme 3: Recent BRUU Adult Learning (8. Article 2, 13. Observatory, 15. CUUPS, 16. UU Nutshell)

Theme 4: Elements of BRUU Service (3. Chalice Lighting, 5. Chime, 10. Joys & Sorrows, 11. Sung Benediction)

## **CONGRATS TO ???**

Alas, no hardy soul submitted a correct answer. Perhaps we need a service on puzzling...

## BRUU

9350 Main Street  
Manassas, VA 20110-5150  
703-361-6269

### **Minister**

Rev. Charlotte Lehmann  
minister@bruu.org

### **BRUU Board of Directors**

#### **President**

Angie Carrera-Earl  
president@bruu.org

#### **Vice President (2022-24)**

Dianne Lane  
vicepresident@bruu.org

#### **Secretary (2022-24)**

Chris Sexton  
secretary@bruu.org

#### **Treasurer (2021-23)**

Heather Berthold  
treasurer@bruu.org

#### **Directors at Large**

Jessica Hruska (2022-24)  
Sophia Kadlubowski (2021-23)  
Chris McClure (2022-24)  
director@bruu.org

#### **Youth Director**

Freya Davies (2022-23)  
director@bruu.org

#### **Immediate Past President**

Rita Romano

#### **Program Council**

Art Muirhead  
programcouncil@bruu.org

#### **Director of Lifespan Religious Education**

Kristin Worthington  
dre@bruu.org

#### **Interim Director of Music**

David Maley  
music@bruu.org

#### **Office Administrator**

Taylor Johnson, office@bruu.org

#### **BRUU OFFICE HOURS**

M-F 10:00 am – 2:00 pm

# THE PUZZLER

## December's Puzzler

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### Sorting the Elves

I met four of Santa's elves the other day, Angeline, Brandy, Cinnamon and Dixie. While I was talking to them I found out that their surnames were Artanis, Buttercup, Cloverleaf and Dreamchaser, but none of them had a repeated initial (Angeline was not called Artanis for example). Cinnamon was younger than Miss Buttercup, but Angeline was older than Miss Buttercup or Miss Dreamchaser. Miss Artanis was older than Angeline. Can you work out what their full names were?

# Good Luck!

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*Please email your answer to -*

newsletter@bruu.org

Use the *Subject Line* - **BRUU PUZZLER**

From the correct answers, one random winner may be chosen to be featured in the newsletter and awarded bragging rights of course. Good Luck!