



# the UNIGRAM

## A Brief Reflection on Religious Diversity and Community

*Rev. Dr. Julia Corbett-Hemeyer, Community Minister*

The affirmation of religious diversity calls for an active and open engagement with diversity. Passive acceptance or tolerance of diversity without engagement (“benign neglect,” perhaps) doesn’t suffice. It requires a commitment to dialogue in order to understand and better appreciate difference, not to reach agreement. The affirmation of religious diversity calls on all of us to join in the dialogue with our religious commitments and our deeply felt sense that our religious truths are true in a uniquely compelling way for *us*. That having been said, we also must recognize that other peoples’ truths are just as important to *them*. To be truly present with an open mind and an open heart, to listen carefully and thoughtfully, and to speak truthfully and with respect, is the first step in building a community in which people of all faiths and those of none are truly welcome for who they are.

The affirmation of religious diversity—or of diversity in any area—calls for the creation of genuine community. At the same time, genuine community must be able to embrace and celebrate difference and

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## A Different Kind of Dual Identity

*Steve Chalk, President Elect*

Upon meeting someone new, we can often expect a version of the question, “So what do you **do**?” (“Well, I think: lots of things! Do you have a specific category in mind?”) In many parts of the American Midwest and South, there seems to be a correlative question. Can you guess? It’s “where do you go to church?”

For me, the answer over a twenty-five year period, since my religious skepticism hardened in my mid-teens, was a firm “nowhere.” We hear about militant atheists, perhaps most-typified by Richard Dawkins and the late Christopher Hitchens. I’m not confrontational by nature, but my personality combined with my upbringing did render a “show-me” person. Much of what I was shown shocked me: the hushed-up suicide

of a dear family member, the premature deaths of several others who declined medical assistance for treatable conditions. My militancy stemmed from my anger...and from my grief.

The late paleontologist Stephen J. Gould wrote of “non-overlapping magisteria,” the notion that scientific inquiry and religious aspiration inhabited separate domains. For Gould, the practical compromise in a nation (the United States) strongly linked to metaphysics was to allot to science factual questions, and to religion, moral, ethical, and spiritual ones. Though as a college student, I greatly admired Gould’s ability to explain evolutionary biology to a weak natural scientist (me!), I have always struggled with Gould’s dualism. There are brilliant secular ethicists, of course. Peter

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## Sunday Mornings at Our (Virtual) Church in the Woods

Online Service at 10:45 am <https://bit.ly/UUCMSundayService>

**August 1 – “Islam” Joel Tishken**

Misinformation and politically-charged rhetoric surrounds our society's perceptions of Islam. Together we'll explore the foundational concepts, beliefs, and practices of the world's second largest religion. Improving our awareness of Muslims and Islam makes us and our congregations better ambassadors of inter-religious understanding and peace.

**August 8 – “Paganism” Rev. Amy Beltaine**

For millennia, Paganism and Earth-based Spirituality has been practiced and refined by hunters, farmers, indigenous people, and those who live close to the land and the sea. This Sunday we will look at some of the rich theo/ologies, traditions, and histories that fall within the ‘Earth-Centered’ label. Then we will explore some of the gifts of these paths for Unitarian Universalists.

**August 15 – “The Dance of Difference” Rev. Julia Corbett-Hemeyer**

Humankind has developed many different religions. They all have some similarities, and each offers its own distinctive attributes as well. What are we to make of all this? For me, Unitarian Universalism provides one answer to that question, an answer that satisfies both my need for some stability and guidance and my seemingly inborn passion to keep the questions open.

**August 22 – “From Bended Knee: A Theology of Shared Ministry” Rev. Coeyman**

As described in the program for Ministry Days: “This Essay posits that genuinely transforming ministry is situated at the intersection of social justice and spiritual development. Tracing the joys and struggles of both their marriage and their ministry, Janne and Rob offer us an invitation into practices that lead to greater clarity and depth (in congregational life).”

**August 29 – “From Bended Knee: A Theology of Shared Ministry” Rev. Coeyman**

As we approach summer’s end, I want to offer a change of pace in worship, to focus for two Sundays on the 2021 Berry Street Essay (BSE). The BSE is one of the longest-running lecture series in the USA, begun by William Ellery Channing in 1820 for Unitarian clergy to discuss ministry. Each year’s essayist(s) is chosen by a team of colleagues, on which I recently served a three-year term. The BSE culminates the annual UUMA Ministry Days preceding General Assembly in June.

### Religious Education for Children & Youth

**Outdoor RE Summer Program through August 28: Saturdays 10:30-noon**

We are looking forward to getting together outside this summer! Looking through the lens of our UU Principles, we will meet on *Saturdays* at UUCM from 10:30 am-noon. See [page 3](#) for details.

### Adult Religious Exploration

**Adult Discussion Group**  
Every Sunday, 9:30 am  
Via Zoom

This group is a chance for people with various personal beliefs to get together and openly discuss a variety of topics. You’ll find weekly topics and a Zoom link listed in the eBlast each Friday.

## Religious Education Corner

*Nadine Tringali, Director of Religious Education*

### Outdoor RE Summer Program

**Saturdays through August 28, 10:30-noon**

We are enjoying being outside this summer! We are meeting on Saturdays at UUCM from 10:30am-noon. *Social distancing and masks are required.*

Saturday, August 7      **Recycled Creations**

Saturday, August 14    **Obstacle Course**

Saturday, August 21    **Clay Creations**

Saturday, August 28    **Water Play**

*Nadine*

## Youth Events

*Nicole Kaplan, Coordinator of Youth Programming*

Youth Group meets most Sundays from 1:30 - 3 pm on Sundays in Zoom Room #2

<https://zoom.us/j/5150188364>

Passcode UUCm#1859

### Summer Schedule

Sunday, August 8, 1:30-3:00 – Back-to-School party at UUCM

Please watch for emails as the summer progresses.

There will be questionnaires and forms regarding the upcoming calendar for the 21-22 school year.

Have a wonderful summer! I hope to see you around!

*Nicole*

## August Dedicated Offering Second Harvest Food Bank's Solar Panel Project

When it comes to making a big impact, we at Second Harvest know working with other organizations focused on doing the same is the best route. Forming relationships with organizations, like yours, who make their communities a priority in their work allows us to come together and continue our mission of giving help for today and hope for tomorrow.

As you know, Second Harvest Food Bank is the region's largest hunger-relief organization with a network of 150 partners, including schools, neighborhood organizations, pantries, and senior sites across Blackford, Delaware, Grant, Henry, Jay, Madison, Randolph, and Wabash counties. Our reach extends across all ages, providing food, resources, education opportunities, and more to expectant mothers, children, older adults, and everyone in between.

Over the years, your consistent support has made a lasting impact on our community, and for that, we cannot thank you enough. This year in May, your investment in our solar campaign has helped us get even closer to our goal of a second array, which leads to further offset costs that can help those battling hunger.

As an added benefit, your impact can go even further during our Summer Matching Challenge where every gift is doubled thanks to our matching partners! By giving to our solar initiative, you're helping fight hunger and improve the lives of your neighbors in need. We could not be more grateful for the contributions made to Second Harvest as well as your dedicated efforts toward our cause to help families build towards a brighter and more stable future free from food insecurity.

Visit [www.curehunger.org/green](http://www.curehunger.org/green) to learn more.

You can donate via text during the Sunday service on August 1 or 8, or mail a check to the church office and note "Aug DO" on the memo line.



## Splinters from the Board

*Benjamin Strack, President*

I think one of the most prominent questions our community is asking right now is, “When will the healing begin?” It is a fair question – we all feel the need for healing. The past several years have brought a lot of divisiveness and pain, often making us feel ‘othered’ while simultaneously ‘othering’ many of us. I’d like to point out how great it is that we’re seeking healing – we just as easily could throw our hands in the air and walk away, or wish those we disagree with wouldn’t return. That isn’t the reaction I have heard from you, and so our desire to heal is a powerful first step. The bad news I have for you all is that if you’re waiting for one huge Jerry Springer-style healing session to heal in one go, that isn’t ever going to happen.

The good news is the healing has already begun, though it may not have gotten to you yet. Members of the board of trustees commented this past year of the improvement in board culture. Rev. Barbara’s wonderful guidance in being a community of power WITH one another, instead of figuring out where the power OVER lies, has forced many of us to rethink given assumptions about how the minister, the board, and the congregation at large work together. I believe the pandemic has calmed some emotions too, making us more prepared to reunite and heal.

The pandemic also caused our community secondary trauma, in taking differing parts of our community and further fracturing and isolating them. We all know we feel lonelier as a church than we used to. We may still have some church folks we connect with, but it’s a much smaller group and it creates an echo chamber for both good and bad sentiments that may not actually represent our whole community. I know many of us hope the work of healing will begin once we return to in person services. But again, not only has the healing already begun, but it also won’t be a sudden event that fixes things. While I’m here, I’ll add that YES we are working on a plan for reuniting on Sunday mornings with in person options, and we’ll be joyful to share

that with you as soon as the plan is solidified in such a way that we can still be a welcoming and inviting community to all.

As I’ve said I don’t think the work of healing will be a simple process. Each of us must recognize hurts we may have felt from others, and also recognize that our own choices may have hurt others. Something I keep finding is that hurt people hurt people, so now when I feel hurt by someone’s words or actions, I start asking myself why they might have made the choice they did. Sometimes the choice can come from ignorance, but often it can be a response to pain or shame of the offender. This is an important step in finding empathy, and I believe is also foundational to respecting the inherent worth and dignity of each of us. I think that there are some hurts within our congregation that we should openly forgive, not erase, to move forward together. I also fully recognize that there are some grievances that are too tender to just forgive – but we must lend voice to these if we are able. Speaking your own truth as to the pain you have felt, and recognizing the honest experience that others have felt, even if it disagrees with your perception of events, is something I find offers the most profound chance of healing.

In *Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood*, a descendent of *Mr. Roger’s Neighborhood*, an important lesson in apologizing comes through in a simple song, “Saying I’m sorry is the first step, then how can I help?” We as a community can learn to say “ouch” when we feel hurt by someone’s words or actions, and then respond to an “ouch” by acknowledging the hurt as valid. Then asking how we can help, we can begin more dialogue as a community. People can understand both the experience of being hurt from events and also the rationale or error that went into a choice that caused hurt. For me, entertaining this dialogue around our experiences is how we don’t just heal the congregation as a one-time aid, but actually change our culture to be one of perpetual healing and acceptance.

In loving service,

**Ben**

## Religious Diversity and Community

**Rev. Julia Corbett-Hemeyer** (continued from page 1)

diversity. It is no accident that the words *community* and *communicate* stem from the same root. Community is made up of those who can and do communicate with each other. It entails a heartfelt commitment to walk together with all our differences and cherished beliefs and practices, recognizing that others have the same privilege.

Communication in community must be based on several things. There must be the *willingness* to communicate—to share ideas, beliefs, and feelings openly and with respect. There must be *openness* to receive what is shared. This requires a safe space, an open space, as it were, free of prejudice and preconceptions. There must be *accurate information*, in order for communication to be meaningful. And there must be genuine *difference*. Community is not and cannot be based on uniformity. It is based on respect for and affirmation of difference. It cannot be based on an attitude of weighing differences to see who is right and who is wrong. People in the community, passionately committed to their own faith and the values they uphold, are also committed to the larger endeavor of understanding, not judgment.

There does, nonetheless, need to be another dimension present in the dialogue. Religion is a very human institution. It is not and cannot be above criticism. Some religious practices and beliefs, like those in any other area of life, are likely to produce undesirable outcomes. Those in the community of diversity, respect and inclusion must together process what they discover, learning to distinguish the uplifting and wholesome from the problematic. Religious attitudes, beliefs and practices that ignore or attack the inherent worth and dignity of every person, every being, that destroy the environment which supports us all, that work against justice and compassion, cannot be allowed to take root and grow.

**Rev. Julia**

## A Different Kind of Dual Identity

**Steve Chalk** (continued from page 1)

Singer is an example, also from my college days, who springs to mind. And when my writing students see one's religious attendance as a stand-in for trustworthiness, I gently point out: there is no perfect correspondence. Organized religion has done a tremendous amount of harm. Among my heresies, since I'm not the government (thank goodness!) and my opinion inhibits no one's free exercise, is that not all denominations are created equal. That, too, was a bitter fruit of my youthful religious experience.

So I could say I lived Gould's dual magisteria over a quarter-century or so—not because I found the idea academically coherent, but because I had imposed a personal schism with the concept of church. I associated the latter with unquestioned allegiance to a series of precepts I found factually—and **thus** morally offensive: in my case from childhood, that notions like sin, disease, and death were not real...just figments of a flawed human imagination. The spiritual realm could never get things wrong, apparent family tragedies to the contrary. If another brutally factual inconvenience—the illness and death of my wife from glioblastoma at age 38—had not occurred, it's possible, even likely, that I never would have attended another church. But I knew of the UU through the experiences of my paternal grandparents, and I had a young child who I desperately needed help guiding amidst my own despair. I didn't, as of 2010, anticipate that Unitarian Universalism might provide an alternative to Gould's dualistic view. But we have, after all, our fourth principle: "a free and responsible search for truth and meaning."

And such freedom, in my view, doesn't preclude drawing from apparently divergent magisteria. Many of us at the UUCM are humanists, trying to use the most rigorous facts and insights of science to improve the quality of human life. Some in that group believe there's a realm, of whatever kind,

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## A Different Kind of Dual Identity

**Steve Chalk** (continued from page 5)

beyond the confines of our bodies and other organic life. Others see an end to experience with the end of consciousness, when brain synapses stop firing. Though an atheist, I am drawn to the burial phrase from the Book of Common Prayer: we move from “earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” I just happen to omit the hope of resurrection. But I admire many of the metaphorical lessons of the Christian New Testament. We are each others’ keepers; to that notion I strongly commit.

In my decade-plus of involvement at the UUCM, no one—ever—has asked me for my personal theology. We help our youth explore that prospect through the Coming of Age program. And perhaps the adults should spend more time in serious conversation with each other about how our theological stances—and the wounds of our religious pasts—play into our present struggles as a church. One need not be a militant atheist (or theist, or pagan, or Buddhist, or Wiccan, or...) to come armed for figurative battle.

But part of me is quite charmed that folks in our congregation—indeed, our denomination—don’t generally lead with their “ism” nor ask about those of others. I belong, we all belong, because we covenant with a set of values, rather than with the certainty of any metaphysical outcome or lack thereof. Our third principle fosters “acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.” We can’t therefore be Gouldian. (Sorry if I just coined a stray adjective!). We simply cannot. In a process that takes place day after day, without apparent end, we must learn to mediate the doctrinal differences in our midst.

Most other churches don’t have to do that. They have prescriptive creeds. And that solidity perhaps accords their congregants, lay leadership, and ministers more harmony of interaction. That was my impression in my childhood church, though as I grew older, I became more aware of tensions below the polite surface. My academic training long ago taught me, and I still repeat to my students, that we

can put any topic on the conversational table...as long as we are mutually respectful. So, yes: I was a UU long before I ever attended our little Church in the Wildwood.

To be a “big-tent” church is, inescapably, to stretch the limits of tolerance. I ponder that difficult truth every day. We have lived that struggle for the decade of my involvement, and the struggle long precedes my time. But we have a choice between struggling with the desire to “win” theologically—deflating the tent while everyone flails around inside—and struggling with the goal of better understanding and appreciating our differences. No one knows for certain what the existential **END** looks like, so we have to make our common **process**, our little, everyday interactions, as sacred as we can, even when they chafe or annoy us. We have to make majestic our magisteria, even as they may appear in conflict.

Uncertainty is endemic to the human condition. Toss in a little humility, and perhaps we concoct a congregational recipe that leaves a better (not bitter) taste in our mouths.

~Steve Chalk

### UUCM Fireside Chat

Hey everyone! As a way to begin reuniting, I want to create an opportunity for folks to gather in-person and reconnect. So let's have some casual conversation time around the church campfire on Fridays at 7pm. Think of this as all of our missed random coffee hour or parking lot chats from the past year.

There will be a limit on how many people attend, so I'm asking that folks RSVP by emailing me if they'd like to attend. And if this Friday fills up, I'll put you on the list for next Friday! Or we can begin additional gatherings if necessary.

~Ben Strack

Email: [Benjamin.strack@gmail.com](mailto:Benjamin.strack@gmail.com) to RSVP

## August 2021 UUCM Calendar

Online calendar: <http://www.uuchurchmuncie.org/members/calendar/>

### Regular Weekly/Monthly Events

Check the eBlast for links to these Zoom meetings and more.

RE Outdoor Gathering – see page 3 for schedule	Saturdays	10:30 am - noon
Adult Discussion Group	Sundays	9:30 am
Worship Service	Sundays	10:45 am
Youth Group – see page 3 for schedule	Sundays	1:30-3:00 pm
Board of Trustees	2 <sup>nd</sup> Wednesday	6:30 pm
Fireside Chats (see <a href="#">page 6</a> for details)	Fridays	7:00 pm

### August Meetings & Events

Check with committee chairs or church office for Zoom links

Transition Team	Monday	Aug 2	7:30 pm
Fundraising Committee	Tuesday	Aug 3	7:00 pm
COVID Task Force	Monday	Aug 9	5:30 pm
Pastoral Associates	Tuesday	Aug 10	4:00 pm
Church Office Closed	Friday	Aug 13	
RE Committee	Sunday	Aug 15	9:00 am
Program Council	Wednesday	Aug 18	7:00 pm
Committee on Ministry	Thursday	Aug 19	7:00 pm
Worship Associates	Wednesday	Aug 25	7:30 pm

### UUCM Office Schedule

**Monday**

1:00-4:00 pm

**Tuesday-Friday**

9:00 am – 4:00 pm

**The office will be closed Friday, August 13.**

The office is open by appointment only – please call or email before dropping in. *Masks are required inside the building.*

Items for the eBlast are due by 9:00 am each Thursday.

Please use the [Publicity Form](#) to submit your announcements. Articles for the September *Unigram* are due Wednesday, August 25.

Please send as attached Word docs to [uucm@uuchurchmuncie.org](mailto:uucm@uuchurchmuncie.org).



### Sharing Gratitude

I am appreciative of the sympathy cards and condolences sent to me upon the death of my husband. It felt like loving arms of this church community were surrounding me.

~Carolyn Cooley

*If you have a gratitude you'd like to submit for the next Unigram, please send it to [uucm@uuchurchmuncie.org](mailto:uucm@uuchurchmuncie.org), subject line "Sharing Gratitude."*

### Pastoral Care

**Listening is Engagement.**

And engagement is healing for our fractured world.

A gentle, open question,  
The silence that does not count seconds or minutes,  
The companionship that says I meet you where you are—  
These are the most powerful tools we have  
To change the world for the better.

Only as we listen, engage and build community,  
Can we heal and be whole,  
Can love stand strong.

(From Spiritual Directors International)

Along with Rev. Barbara and myself, our Pastoral Associates are available to listen when you need to talk.

~Rev. Julia

## UUCM Staff & Leadership

### Staff

**Rev. Dr. Barbara Coeyman, Interim Minister**  
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Office Hours: Monday 1:00 – 4:00 pm | Tuesday – Friday 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

## Unitarian Universalist Church of Muncie

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