

Good morning. My name is Christine Organ. I'm a member of the Worship Ministry and President-Elect of the Board of Trustees. For the past few weeks, we've been hearing about the various ministries here at Countryside – Kinship, Service, Study – and all of the various programs that they support. These testimonials have been enlightening and informative, since there are so many diverse and exciting activities here at Countryside – some of which we might not even know about.

But worship is a little different. You're here, so you sort of know what a worship entails... but sometimes we need a reminder. When you come here on Sunday morning, you get amazingly powerful music that literally gives you chills. You listen to readings and sermons that inspire and teach us how to better live out our UU principles in the world. There are prayers and meditations that bring us a sense of peace and calm. Vespers services give us a chance for mid-week reflection, and Spiritual Journeys services help us to get to know each other better. Interfaith vigils – like the one being held here on February 15th – allow us to stand in solidarity with our neighbors of diverse faiths and cultures.

In many ways, worship is the foundation of our congregation – a chance for us to come together to connect, reflect and feed our spirits in community. Reverend Hilary wrestles with all there is to say, what people seem to need to hear, and what other preachers and speakers can bring to CCUU. She pours her heart into reading, research, reflection, and writing and works closely with our Music Director, Alison Vernon, who pours her own heart, soul, and time into finding soul stirring music to work with themes and issues. She works closely with our pianist, Janice Razaq, to shape music for worship that is cohesive, uplifting, and together they shape worship for us all. With our Worship Council, Rev. Hilary and Alison explore and discuss congregational hopes and yearnings and ways to evolve our worship to meet our times, our needs, and our vision. Together in Worship Council and across the worship ministry, we understand that the needs of the congregation are ever-evolving, and we are currently looking at ways to reflect a variety of moods, tones and worship styles in our services.

Speaking from a personal perspective, Countryside has never been more important to me than it is right now. The world is “unsettled,” to say the least, and many of us seek refuge in this spiritual community – whether at worship service, during conversations at coffee hour, participating in one of the various kinship groups, striving for social justice, or learning more about our own faith and the faiths of others. This is a community that allows us to learn, grow, and act in good conscience. This community rejuvenates us, motivates us, and inspires us – but it also restores us so that we have the energy to work toward building a better world.

Now, more than ever, we need the voice of liberal religion –for the world and for ourselves. And Countryside needs *you*. If you'd like to learn more about getting involved with worship ministry, you can talk to Hilary. If your family is interested in participating in the chalice lighting at a service, please see Jules. If you're interested in joining the choir, please see Alison. And please, please give generously when you complete your pledge form in upcoming weeks so that we can continue doing the work of building the beloved community.