Journaling Circle: Writing Together for Self-Discovery
1st Thursdays (Dec 6), 10am
Each gathering will open with a short meditation. We will then free write and write from prompts related to our monthly themes. Through sharing our writings, we also share life’s journey and deepen relationships within our community. Bring a notebook/journal and a pen and your desire for personal exploration and growth. If interested, please sign up here.

All-Ages Carol Sing & Holiday Crafts
Friday, December 7, 7 pm
Join us in Atherton Hall for this family-friendly event—adults, kids—this party is for everyone! Gather ‘round the piano to sing familiar holiday songs or make an easy holiday craft—or do both! We have song books, craft supplies, and beverages. Please bring a snack to share or just bring yourself for the warmth of gathering in community fun.

Fair Trade Bazaar
Dec 9, 9:30 am—2 pm
This year’s annual Fair Trade Bazaar has some new vendors with some lovely items. There is a lot more to fair trade than just coffee and chocolate. You will find jewelry, clothing, home goods, toys and much more. The Fair Trade Bazaar is open to the public, so bring your friends & neighbors! Your purchases will improve lives through a sustainable economic system.
Hope to see you at the Bazaar!

CCUU Monthly Fair Trade Sale: Dec 9
Our monthly table of Equal Exchange items for sale—fair trade chocolate, coffee, tea, cocoa, olive oil, and snacks—will be available during the Fair Trade Bazaar. For each pound of Equal Exchange foods purchased, 20 cents goes to the UUSC’s Small Farmer Fund.

Mid-Year Payment Reminder
As we reach the midpoint of the church fiscal year (Dec 31), are you midway through your pledge payments? You can make a donation online by clicking the Donate Now button on the front page of www.ccuu.org. To check your contributions-to-date:
• go to https://ccuu.breezechms.com/
• if you have already created an account, log in with your user name & password
• if you have not created an account, click on “Create Account” under Sign In
• Once logged in, click on “My Profile.” Click on ‘Giving’ to view your pledge and contribution history and download it if you want a printed statement. 2018 tax-year statements will be emailed in January.

Intro to CCUU
1st Sundays
Newcomers are invited to attend a brief orientation to Countryside Church and Unitarian Universalism. It is offered the 1st Sunday of each month following the worship service.
From Your Board of Trustees

New Board Member

George Motto has resigned from the Board. The Nominating Committee asked Chris Hitchcock to fill George’s seat/term and he has accepted.

Beloved Conversations

When hard times happen or life throws a curve ball, many people ask, “is my faith being tested?” While not a question typically asked by Unitarian Universalists, the premise behind testing one’s faith raises an important point about personal character: what are one’s true colors? Sometimes, it’s helpful to test one’s faith (faith in humanity, faith in personal beliefs/traditions, or faith in the UU principles) to challenge long-held ideas, beliefs or biases that might be affecting how we put faith into action and to make sure our character aligns with our values.

Beloved Conversations: Meditations on Race and Ethnicity is a program that pressure tests our commitment to the inherent worth and dignity of every person. Developed by The Fahs Collaborative at Meadville Lombard Theological School, it explores racism in society and culture and much more. It brings into sharp relief deeply guarded biases, blind spots and obstacles that can keep us from living this most important UU principal.

Countryside Church is one of more than 140 UU, Jewish, and Quaker congregations across the US participating in the Beloved Conversations small-group workshops/discussions. CCUU is in its third year leading cohort groups of 8-12 people through the curriculum that guides participants in discussions about their own experiences/biases and a chance to understand how “centuries of racially informed social, emotional and spiritual practices wound every person, no matter their racial and/or ethnic identity.”

This year, the board of trustees is one of two groups at CCUU participating in the program, which kicked off at a retreat attended by Chicago-area UU congregations in mid-November.

Beloved Conversations is an important tool in our work toward racial and cultural diversity. This kind of “pressure testing” is important for all UUs, especially those in congregational leadership. It forces us to look squarely and critically at how we conduct ourselves and the relationships we choose (or avoid). And, while none of us willingly or knowingly would discriminate against another person – sometimes we just don’t know what we don’t know.

Our faith calls us to affirm and promote justice, equity and compassion in human relations and the Beloved Conversations program "poses evocative questions that help learners reconcile their experiences with race/ethnicity in their lives alongside the larger cultural systems that shape their perspective."

The board looks forward to sharing insights and outcomes from its experience in the program in a special Sunday service in 2019. As future Beloved Conversations groups form at CCUU, announcements will appear in Focus and the Sunday Times.

With gratitude, Christine Organ & Maryanne O’Dowd

Paving The Way To Our Future

Thank you to all who have made pledges toward paying down the church mortgage. If you have not yet made your payment, please do so by Dec 31. Direct any questions to any Board member. And don’t forget to select a river stone from the table in Atherton Hall, and write a word or short phrase or draw a simple image that conveys your message on a river stone. Place your stone in the glass vase and in the future we’ll make a paver for the garden using all the stones. Thanks. You rock!

Our Winter Weather Closing Policy

Now that winter weather is upon us, please remember that if the decision is made to close the church, we will publicize the decision:

- on the church website,
- on the church Facebook page,
- on the Congregational Administrator's voicemail message (847-359-8440 ext 1), and
- with the Emergency Closing Center (which publicizes on the local TV and radio stations).

Guidelines considered when making the decision: If the wind chill in the greater Chicago area is colder than 40 degrees below zero or if a weather emergency has been issued because of snow or wind, we will cancel all church events, including any committee meetings, office hours, Sunday morning religious education, and Sunday worship.


CCUU puts a high priority on the safety of staff, members, and guests. Although the church may remain open, individuals may find that their local conditions make it unsafe for them to travel. When in doubt, please stay home!

Hospitality Needed

Welcome people to our spiritual home in the same way you would welcome them to your residence. We will especially need ushers on Christmas Eve to help with the candlelighting ritual in addition to normal usher duties.

Sign up online to help - http://www.signupgenius.com/go/70a044ea4a72fa13-sunday—or go to www.ccuu.org and click on the ‘opportunities to serve’ graphic. Contact the church office with questions. Thank you, all!

Have a Smart Phone or Tablet?

Download the free Breeze CHMS (church management system) app! Once downloaded, the church ID is CCUU. Check your giving and access the church directory right from your phone.
Minister’s Muse

When the heavy snow fell on Sunday, I was sitting by the fire. I kept thinking that I was hearing thumping sounds. I dismissed it as imagination. Mark was outside shoveling in spite of the continuing snowfall – his theory is that it is better to clear some of the snow out of the way before the heavyweight of all of it accumulates. He came back inside and sat by me on the sofa as we listened to an audiobook together. Suddenly, we heard a giant crack and crash outside and hurried to look out the back door. The door couldn’t be opened because there was a giant chunk of tree blocking it. We discovered that a thick system of branches had fallen from the top of the tree. Smaller branches had cracked off onto the roof, but the really heavy stuff had fallen conveniently onto the ground. First relief and then shock as we both realized that Mark had been outside shoveling right there only a few minutes before, and if that chunk of tree had fallen on him, serious injury, if not death, would have ensued. We had been lucky.

I don’t believe that anything special protected us. I have a special pebble in my shoe, so to speak, that rubs me raw when people say that God was watching over them when they escape tragedy. Too many good people don’t escape tragedy.

Honestly, it falls into the same category for me as saying that everything happens for a reason - if we are resilient, we make meaning out of what happens, learn from experience, but that isn’t why it happens -- @%#$ happens.

And if there’s a kind of karma that I believe in, it is a global karma – something that I may do can have an impact not on my own life but on the life of somebody else somewhere else – for good or ill, and the small and large acts of greed in one society may concretely harm and bankrupt another. The thing with this sort of global karma is that you have to actually care about the impact of your actions on others, so that when disaster strikes them you might ask yourself if you contributed to it. I imagine what kind of a world this would be if, though it would take lots of work and awareness, we lived as though the things that happen to other people may happen for a reason – perhaps not of their own causing, perhaps even a reason in which we share some responsibility.

In Western society since time out of mind, we’ve wanted to believe that there was some way to live that would allow us to control our destinies, our daily lives, our fortunes. When things are going well, we may feel chosen, blessed. But we really haven’t got that kind of control over our lives. It’s a crap shoot on one hand and on the other, it’s part of the destiny we all share as people in an interdependent world.

I think about foreign policy, international trade, vast disparities of wealth. In our nation and the other developed nations of the world, our drive to continually accumulate so that we might have some (in fact illusory) control over our own lives unbalances the scales of our interdependence, creating want and conflict around the world. This is a religious, a moral issue. It’s an issue of global karma that, ultimately, comes home to roost. Just as the issue of climate change, fed abetted by greed, comes home to roost as well.

(continued...)

Minister’s Muse, cont’d

After the branch fell, I felt deep gratitude that Mark was still with me, that we were sitting together again listening to our audiobook. It felt tidy, but I know the world isn’t so tidy. Storms happen, tragedies happen. My role as a person of faith – not in a micromanaging God but in the power of the interdependent web of all being – is to nourish my own compassion and my care for the strands that I pull, for the suffering of others (far from home or nearby).

And, as the season of giving has landed upon us, I know that my role is to strengthen, to give to, and to support that web, not because my acts of helpfulness or moral compassion will necessarily improve my own life directly, but because the stronger and healthier that web is, the more joy I will have rising directly from the peace and joy of others.

Among UUs

CCUU members Venus and George Gintowt are delighted to share the news that their son, Richard Gintowt (raised at CCUU), and Jalyn DeBarge exchanged wedding vows on November 18 in Oakland, California, where they currently reside. Congratulations & Best Wishes to Richard & Jalyn from the congregation!

Social Action News

Holiday Gifts

Thank you to those who submitted gift cards for the local high school students who are in precarious housing situations; you provided gift cards totaling $885. If you signed up to provide a gift for the Palatine Township program, please drop it off in the church office by this Sunday, Dec 9.

For Your Information

Social Action Committee would like to make you aware of the following, in the event that you have strong feelings and want to make your voice heard: Scott Thompson, the superintendent of schools in Palatine District 15, has proposed that the district hire retired police officers to be armed security guards in all the schools. They would also act as school secretary/clerical workers in the main office of each school. If you’re interested in addressing the issue, the D-15 school board is scheduled to consider the proposal at their regular meeting on Weds, Dec 12 at Sundling Jr. High on Smith St.

Reminder: Help Provide PADS Meals

Our congregation provides the dinner for the PADS shelter at the Presbyterian Church of Palatine on the 4th Wednesday of the month, October through April. Please remember to check the e-update and Sunday Times for announcement of each month’s sign-up—you can also go to www.ccuu.org and click on ‘opportunities to serve,’ which will take you to the church SignUpGenius, where the current month’s meal sign-up is posted once available. Thank you to those who have provided parts of the meals for October & November!

Monthly Meetings ~ 4th Sundays

Our meetings convene at 11:30 am in Classroom #2. Grab a cup of coffee in Atherton Hall and join us. Send agenda items to Dan Yokas & Mike Graves, SocialActionChair@ccuu.org.
Upcoming Worship Services

Worship Services & Religious Education classes are on Sundays at 10:00 am.
Unless otherwise noted below, young people attend the beginning of worship with their families.

NOTE: Announcements begin 5 minutes prior to the start of the worship service.
Worship descriptions are also on the church website: http://ccuu.org/services/

Dec 2 All-Church Ferias Ignis (fire holiday) Service Rev. Krivchenia
This is an All-Church Service; young people attend the entire service with their families. This service is also known as our Chalice Service, honoring a week-long holiday which celebrates our UU Principles. You are invited to bring your chalice from home to place on a special table at the front of the sanctuary.
Share-the-Plate: Half of the non-pledge income collected in the offering will be donated to the New Poor People’s Campaign.

Dec 9 Chants of Peace Rev. Krivchenia
Young people begin in their classrooms for our annual Hanukkah Fest.
Share-the-Plate: Half of the non-pledge income collected in the offering will be donated to the UUA Disaster Relief Fund to support those affected by California fires. Donations will assist UU congregations in fire-scarred areas and support local partner organizations serving the community at large.

Dec 16, 10 am All-Church Christmas Pageant Rev. Krivchenia & Kathy Underwood
This is an All-Church Service; young people attend the entire service with their families. See information below about how to participate in the pageant.
Share-the-Plate: Half of the non-pledge income collected in the offering will be donated to the UU Musicians Network.

Dec 16, 4 pm Winter Solstice Service
Join us for our annual Yule celebration which includes candlelight, music, readings, and a spiral of greens. Stay after the service for hot beverages and fellowship.

Dec 23 Advent of Love Rev. Krivchenia
Young people begin in the sanctuary with their families and will be sung out to a Faith in Action project for Partners for Our Community (POC), one of our service partners.

Dec 24, 4:30 pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Sunset Service
Join us for Christmas reflections, lovely choral music, beloved hymns, and the magic of candlelight. This is an all-church service; all young people, including infants and toddlers, attend the service with their families. Our Christmas Eve Offering will be donated to the Minister’s Discretionary Fund, which is used to help those in need within our congregation.

Dec 30 New Year’s Around the World Rev. Krivchenia
This is an all-church service; young people attend the service with their families. Following the service, the Krivchenias will provide a lunch of greens and beans and rice to wish health and wealth in the coming year; feel free to bring nonalcoholic beverages, bread, or crackers to add to the meal.

Jan 6 to be announced Rev. Misha Sanders, pulpit guest

All-Church Christmas Pageant
Dec 16, 10 am

On December 16, during our worship service, we will hold our annual Christmas Pageant, which is a sing-along Living Nativity Story, and the entire congregation has a part! We have several parts from which you can choose:

- Donkey- Wear gray clothes
- Cow- Wear brown or black clothes
- Sheep- White clothes (wool or fluffy accents)
- Angel- Wear white clothes
- Towns Person- Wear simple clothes to match time theme of nativity story
- Shepherd- Wear loose flowing simple clothes with sash for waist and/or head dressing

Feel free to be as creative or extravagant as you wish with your costumes. Special guests are welcome (examples may be: dinosaurs, princesses, super heroes, etc.)

This year, we will be dividing the narration among those young people who are interested in reading. If your child would like to read part of the narration, please sign up online: https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30e0b45acaa2aaafb6-christmas.

The morning of the pageant, we will have costumes from which children and youth can choose, and there will be simple animal masks, tails, halos, and misc. items available to add to your costume if you need them. Feel free to bring any extra costume items to share if you have them.
This Month’s Ministry Theme: Mystery

From Our Interim Director of Lifespan Religious Education (DLRE)

Mystery

...is our theme for this month, and December is the perfect month to explore it. The darkness of the season lends itself to introspection and thought on the mysteries of life’s big questions.

Many faith traditions are at this time of year too: Hanukkah, Advent, Bodhi Day, St. Nicholas Day, Las Posadas, Yule, the winter solstice, and of course, Christmas and New Year’s. The mystery of the oil that burned for eight days, the mystery of the Buddha’s enlightenment, the mystery of the sun’s disappearance, the mystery of the birth of Jesus. Mystery is one of the connections we have between the many faiths we have as people in this world.

For me, star-gazing has always brought the mystery and wonder into my soul, especially on a clear, cold winter’s night. This poem in part, by Janet Hutchinson, says it beautifully:

Look how big the sky is, the deep distances between stars.

Little speck, that’s you; laughable speck, that’s me.

How could we contain The Truth, all that overwhelming light?

Our truth is just a pinprick in mystery’s velvet curtain.

And what of our collective mystery here at Countryside? We all have hidden talents and muses, but do we share them with each other? Do we let another see our “pinprick in mystery’s velvet curtain”? It makes us vulnerable to do so, yet we long for those real connections. Like many things in life, the scariest part is just getting started. So why not go for it? After all, when we have truly meaningful connections, we have more to gain than lose.

In faith, Kathy

Meaningful Connections...

There are many ways to connect with others by being involved in the religious education program! Taking care of babies and toddlers, helping with the Christmas pageant, teaching a class once a month, helping with social action projects, and more! Email Kathy at dire@ccuu.org for details, or sign up via the LRE Update.

Guest at Your Table (GAYT)

During the Nov 18 worship service, Guest at Your Table boxes were distributed. If you did not receive a collection box, you can download a template to make your own here: https://www.uuoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Template-for-Homemade-GAYT-Boxes-2018-19.pdf. OR you can contribute cash or a check, payable to UUSC. We will collect donations prior to and during our January 13 worship service.

GAYT is UU Service Committee’s annual intergenerational program to raise support for and awareness about critical human rights issues. Donations help UUSC and their partners respond to extraordinary human rights challenges of today, address root causes of injustice, and build capacity to respond to future crises.

Contributions of any amount qualify for UUSC membership. Contributions of $125 or more are eligible to be matched dollar-for-dollar by the UU Congregation of Shelter Rock in Manhasset, NY. More info at uusc.org/guest.

Full Week Faith...

...reminds us to carry our UU faith into our daily lives. Try to take time each day, individually or as a family, to slow down and engage in spiritual and mindful practices to connect your mind, body, and spirit to our faith.

Chalice Lighting

Light a chalice to begin your day, before a meal, or before your spiritual practice...

Embrace the Night

by Jennifer Leota Gray

Universal mystery,
Guide us away from the desire to
Shine light in all the corners.
Teach us to embrace the night,
For without the darkness,
We never see the stars.

Spiritual Reflections and Connections

Each month, we connect our monthly theme to one of our Principles or Sources. This month, we explore our first source: Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and openness to the forces which create and uphold life. Each week try doing any of the following either alone, or with a friend, partner, or as a family:

- Share with your family or friends, or journal on your own, a time when you have experienced the “transcending mystery and wonder” in your life.
- Create something that represents mystery and wonder to you – paint, draw, sculpt – any medium that inspires you.
- Take a walk on a clear night and observe the stars. Do this on other evenings and see if you notice how their position changes in the sky. You can also look for the International Space Station to fly over by going to https://spotthestation.nasa.gov/ and entering your town.
- Look for mystery and wonder in your daily life – the color of someone’s eyes; the intricacies of a snowflake; the feather of a bird; or the footprints of other animals in snow or mud.
- Enjoy these books and movies this month too:
  Books for children:
  - I Wonder by Annaka Harris
  - Star Stuff: Carl Sagan and the Mysteries of the Cosmos by Stephanie Roth Sisson
  - A “Sparkle Days” Walk Tradition with the book “Henry And Mudge In The Sparkle Days” by Cynthia Rylant
  Books for adults:
  - Earthy Mysticism: Spirituality for Unspiritual People by Tex Sample
  - When God is Gone Everything is Holy by Chet Raymo
  - Rational Mysticism: Spirituality Meets Science in the Search for Enlightenment by John Horgan
  Movies:
  - The Diving Bell and The Butterfly (PG13)
  - The Tree of Life (PG13)
  - Awakenings (PG13)
  - Samsara (PG13)
  - Waking Life (R)
This Month’s Ministry Theme: Mystery

What does it mean to be a People of Mystery?
Unitarian Universalists love puzzles. We proudly announce that we are the religion that loves questions and questioning. Or to put it another way, we love figuring out life’s mysteries.

But what if mystery isn’t just something to figure out? What if it’s also something to be listened to? This is the lesser recognized call of our faith. Being a people of mystery isn’t just about engaging life as a marvelous puzzle. It’s also about allowing yourself to be spoken to by life’s wonder. One of the most elegant articulations of this comes from the poet Mary Oliver, a much-loved poet of Unitarian Universalists; in her poem, Wild Geese, she writes,

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting—
over and over announcing your place in the family of things.

Oliver’s call to listen for life’s announcements implies a letting go. Mystery is funny this way. You can’t make it speak. Indeed the more you pursue the answers to life’s mysteries, the more distant they become. If we want mystery to speak, it seems we have to be willing to be caught off guard. UU humanist minister and poet, David Breeden, captures this beautifully when he writes,

I dug and dug
Deeper into the earth
Looking for blue heaven
Choking always
On piles of dust rising
Then once
At midnight
I slipped
And fell into the sky

Slipping, and then falling into the sky. Is there a better way to describe our dance with mystery? Isn’t this what all the great mystics have been trying to tell us from the start? That sitting at the heart of mystery is not the unknown, but unity. We fall into mystery and it falls into us. Its voice is one that whispers, “I am you and you are me.” Mystery doesn’t put up barriers; it dissolves them. Have—n’t all of us faced the wonder and mystery of a sunset, the stars, a baby’s first cry or a lover’s wet kiss and thought to ourselves, “Who I am does not end at the barrier of my skin”?

So friends, this month, let’s let ourselves fall in and open up. So many opportunities to slip into the sky and let it slip into us. Let’s put down all the puzzling and the figuring out. Just long enough to notice that life isn’t simply trying to stump us. It’s also trying to connect with us.

Mystery Questions to Consider
Don’t treat these questions like “homework” or a list that needs to be covered in its entirety. Instead, simply pick the one question that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The goal is to figure out what being a part of a people of vision means for you and your daily living. So, which question is calling to you?

1. What was the first mystery to capture your imagination? How does that still shape you today?
2. Who has taught you the most about “living with and loving the mystery”?
3. What’s the most unprovable thing you place your faith in?
4. What mysterious experience still nags at your disbelief?
5. Do sunsets and sunrises whisper to you?
6. Have you ever heard silence speak?
7. If you had to name one “holiday miracle” you believe in, what would it be?
8. Has mysterious meaningful coincidence (synchronicity) ever pointed you in the direction you needed to go, right when you were not sure of your way?
9. Pico Iyer says that “The opposite of knowledge isn’t always ignorance. It can be wonder. Or mystery. Possibility. And in my life, I’ve found it’s the things I don’t know that have lifted me up and pushed me forwards, much more than the things I do know.” When has “what you don’t know” pushed you forward into new possibilities and greater knowing?
10. In your experience, has love been a mystery or a choice? Has it been an accomplishment you created and choose or a mysterious “other presence” that choose and created you?
11. Do you spend more time treating life like a problem to be solved, a game to be won, a struggle to be survived or a mystery to be lived?
12. It’s said that we will never experience the fullness of our being until we get in touch with the mysterious “divine that dwells within us.” Has this been true for you? Maybe more importantly, what if it’s true?
13. It’s said that we stop struggling to feel at peace once we experience the mysterious and transcendent “love that will not let us go.” Has this been true for you? Maybe more importantly, what if it’s true?

Our Soul Connections small ministry groups discuss the monthly themes, questions, and activities each month. For further info regarding the Soul Connections program, email Don Bussey, SoulConnections@ccu.org

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Calling All Creative People
If you have original artwork such as paintings, pottery, photography, sculpture, writing, etc. that convey our Soul Matters monthly themes and would be willing to display your work at our church, please submit your pieces to Lois Phillips or Alison Vernon before the first of each month.

Upcoming themes: Jan-Possibility, Feb-Trust, March-Journey, April-Wholeness, May-Curiosity, June-Beauty.
Yoga ~ 1st & 3rd Thursdays, 6-7 pm
Join us in the Spirit Play Room (rm 9/10) for this all-levels class, which focuses on stretches and poses that calm the mind while increasing balance, range of motion, and core strength. Questions? Email Laura.Mandell@comcast.net.

20-30 Somethings ~ 1st & 3rd Sundays
If you are in your 20s or 30s, please join us following the worship service in classroom 4. Childcare is available during the meetings. We also meet at other times during the month for socializing and service. For more info or to be added to our email list, email 2030s@ccuu.org.

40-50 Somethings
The 40-50s group is for those too old for the 20-30s group and not yet ready for the Transitions group (and the ages listed are guidelines; if you’re over 59, you’re still welcome to join us). We generally meet on the 1st Saturday of the month. To be on our email list to receive notification of upcoming events, go to http://ccuu.org/mailman/listinfo/4050slst_ccuu.org

Buddhist Study Group ~ 2nd Sundays
The Buddhist Study Group meets the 2nd Sunday of the month from 11:45 am to 1:15 pm. Everyone is welcome. We read selected Buddhist texts, discuss them, and try to apply the principles and techniques to our everyday lives. Topics include mindfulness, meditation, and deepening our spiritual understanding. We practice mindful breathing, walking meditation, stress management, and cultivate the capacities to be kind and compassionate and to bring joy into our lives.

Feminine Divine Women’s Group
4th Saturdays, 9:30 am
Join us in classroom 6. This year, we are reading some books with a feminine divine or feminine historical theme; The first book we are discussing is Men Explain Things to Me by Rebecca Solnit.

Book Discussions

Book Circle: Jan 6
All are welcome to join us in classroom 6 to discuss Tailspin: The People and Forces Behind America’s Fifty-Year Fall - and Those Fighting to Reverse It by Steven Brill. We gather at 6:15 pm; discussion begins at 6:30 pm.

Last Mondays Book Group: Jan 28
We will not meet in December. Join us at 7 pm in the Stokes Room to discuss Prayer for Owen Meany by John Irving. In January, we will discuss the first 5-6 chapters (about half the book), and we’ll discuss the remaining chapters in February.

Young Adults Gathering: Dec 16, 6 pm
Those who are 18-30 years of age, whether newly out of school or attending college or working, are invited to meet in room 4 for conversation and community. For more info, contact Kim at kimberlyann417@gmail.com.

Resistance and Transformation
An Adult Faith Development Series
This series is part of the UUA Tapestry of Faith curricula and is grounded in Unitarian Universalist social history, theology, and current events. This series is taught by various members of the congregation and some by Rev. Hilary and Interim DLRE Kathy Underwood. Sessions are held from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm; childcare will be available. Due to budgetary restrictions, we are no longer able to provide lunch; please bring a sack lunch.

You do not need to attend every session. Although you can attend without registering, it does help us with planning: https://ccuu.breezechms.com/form/Resistance-Transformation. Dates & topics for the next few sessions:
• Dec 9: Free & Responsible Speech—past & present
• Jan 13: Moving Beyond the Walls—taking politics public
• Jan 27: Civil Rights in the Unitarian Universalist Context (Note: topics may be rearranged, depending on availability of session leaders; watch e-updates & Sunday Times for most up to date information)

Atheist, Humanist, Agnostic (AHA) Discussion
2nd Tuesdays, 7 pm
All are welcome to join us in classroom 4. On Dec 11, we will discuss Christmas and the holiday season and what it means or does not mean to those in the group. We will discuss how we spend our holiday season now and in years past.

Transitions
The mission of Transitions is to provide a forum for adults to explore life transitions with a supportive community during daytime hours.

Monthly Program & Lunch: Dec 27, 10 am
Join us December 27 at 10 am in Atherton Hall. Our program will consist of a Christmas party with Janet Simmons leading us in caroling and a talk by Christina Correa and Kathy McMillen of Partners for Our Community - formerly Palatine Opportunity Center (POC) - explaining what POC is all about. POC is one of Countryside’s three service partners. Potluck lunch will follow; bring a dish to share or your own individual lunch. All are welcome; invite a friend!

Open Forum Discussion
Sundays, 9-9:50 am
Please join us in classroom 5 to discuss “the issues of the day” while respectfully welcoming different perspectives. On Dec 2, 9, and 16, we will hold a 3-part discussion on “how we can discuss, together, better.” We’ll reflect on the shared agreements we want to implement to make the Open Forum Discussion the best experience it can be for everyone and for anyone who might like to try us out. For more information and/or to join the Forum email list, email vidaxel@axeldesigns.com.
Church Year Highlights to Come
Mark Your Calendar
December ~ Theme: Mystery
  9  Fair Trade Bazaar
  16  All-Church C’mas Pageant
     TBA Winter Solstice Service
  24  C'mas Eve Candlelight Service
January ~ Theme: Possibility
  20  All-Church MLK Service followed by monthly potluck lunch
February ~ Theme: Trust
     Annual Stewardship Drive
  10  ChocolateFest potluck during Coffee hours
  24  All-Church Sr High Service
March ~ Theme: Journey
  2  Music with a Mission
 10  Indoor Farmers Market
 17  Monthly Potluck after worship
April ~ Theme: Wholeness
  5-7  MidAmerica UU Regional Assembly in St Louis
  7  Western Crescent Choral Fest at CCUU
 14  Monthly Potluck after worship
 20  Easter
 19 or 26  Passover Seder
 28  All-Church Earth Day worship service; Child Dedications
May ~ Theme: Curiosity
  5  All-Church Coming of Age Service
 19  Congregational Annual Meeting
June ~ Theme: Beauty
  2  All-Church Flower Communion
  9  All-Church Pride Service
 16  Summer Solstice Service
 19-23: UU General Assembly in Spokane WA

WhaleCoast Alaska 2019
Four UU congregations in Alaska invite you to our awe-inspiring 25th annual Alaska tour program. See Alaska through the eyes of local UUs, with friendly homestays and unique tour activities. Tours led by a longtime member of the Fairbanks UU Congregation who is an Alaska travel expert. See wildlife, visit Denali National Park, experience Native Alaskan culture.
Find out more about this Alaskan trip of a lifetime. For complete info, go to WhaleCoastAK.org, email dfrey@whalecoastak.org, call 907-322-4966, or email DFrey@whalecoastak.org. Discount for groups of 8 or more. We would love to share our Alaska with you!

6th Annual Vigil to #EndGunViolence
Tuesday, December 11, 7 pm
Join Northwest Suburbs Organizing for Action (NWSOFA) in the Sanctuary at Countryside Church UU to stand as a community to remember and honor all victims and survivors of gun violence. Please bring your friends and family as we pledge to take action to shine a light on the tragic toll of gun violence and do WhateverItTakes to #EndGunViolence. A time of reflection and fellowship will follow from 8:00 to 8:45.

ICDI Holiday Cards
One of our service partners, Interfaith Community for Detained Immigrants, is excited to share their 2018 holiday cards. All designs were created by people who are detained in one of four Chicago-area detention centers. The inside is blank so the cards can be used broadly. Proceeds of card sales will go to our commissary fund.

Wellness House Offerings at CCUU
Hypnosis Group & Reiki Sessions
Held here at CCUU the 1st Saturday of the month, these offerings are open to anyone in our geographical area who has or had cancer of any kind. The hypnosis program is led by our community minister, the Rev. Dr. Giles, and the reiki sessions are offered by the Rev. Lindsey Bates. These are free, and registration is required. To register, email kmitchell@wellnesshouse.org or call 630-654-5197.

UU Men’s Retreat ~ Register Now
Jan 25-27, 2019
Unity Temple men's group invites men from other UU congregations to join them at Cabrini Retreat Center in Des Plaines. This year’s retreat theme, It's My Story (And I'm Sticking to it), will involve us sharing our own stories. Good times, low times, or just humorous stories. It's time to share. New this year, we will offer Saturday only participation for $50. Please join us for this long-standing event. Registration form is available on the revolving kiosk in the narthex (lobby area outside sanctuary) and on the kinship ministry table in Atherton Hall.

MidAmerica Regional Assembly
April 5-7, 2019 in St Louis Missouri
Keynote: UUA President Rev. Frederick-Gray
Our theme is Intersections – how we live, work, and relate, as well as share, withhold, and leverage power in our world. Presentations and workshops will explore identities we encounter and embody, the challenges of social inequality, and tools & skills we need in order to work more effectively with one another, as well as the general ‘nuts & bolts’ of congregational life, such as leadership, stewardship, membership, and religious education. Join us to explore, share, and worship with fellow Unitarian Universalists. More info: www.uua.org/midamerica/ra

UU Bed & Breakfast in Fort Myers, FL
The UU Church of Fort Myers runs this program as a fundraiser January through April each year. Stay with a UU host family for up to seven days. Pick up a pamphlet & registration form from the bulletin board across from the church office (under “Our Denomination”). For more info, go to http://www.uucfm.org/about-uucfm/hospitality/bed-a-breakfast or email bedandbreakfast@uucfm.org.
This calendar shows upcoming Church meetings & events. All meetings and events held in the building are listed on the church website, under Programs & Events - [http://ccuu.org/calendar/](http://ccuu.org/calendar/). If your meeting or event is not listed, please submit a room reservation form (available in the office or on the website with the calendar) to the office.

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Focus
Published by Countryside Church UU
1025 N Smith Rd · Palatine IL 60067
847-359-8440 · ccuu@ccuu.org · www.ccuu.org

Our Covenant
We unite to strengthen the bonds of kinship among all persons, to promote human dignity, and to increase reverence for life’s creating, sustaining, and transforming power through worship, study, and service.

Our Mission
We are a spiritual community actively answering the call for love, compassion, reason, and justice.

Our Vision
Countryside is committed to being a voice of and active presence for liberal religion in the northwest suburbs. Empowered by our Mission Statement, we endeavor to:
• Create a welcoming place of connectedness, compassion, and respect for people of all ages. • Advance inclusivity and diversity within our congregation and community. • Care for each other in times of joy, sorrow, and transition. • Provide for spiritual and intellectual growth and inspire lifelong learning. • Promote a sustainable future for our community and world by acting with a social, environmental, and global conscience. • Communicate and spread the message of Unitarian Universalism within and beyond our community. • Promote peace and justice in our congregation, communities, and the world. • Engage in thoughtful stewardship of our resources to achieve our mission and carry out our vision.

Upcoming Focus Deadlines
Submit all articles by 10 am to ccuu@ccuu.org
Between Focus issues, written communication is via E-Updates & the Sunday Times insert to the Order of Worship. Deadline for e-updates & Sunday Times is Weds at 9 am.

Church Office Hours: Mon-Thurs 10am-4pm; Fri 9am-Noon
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Minister@ccuu.org
Interim Director of Lifespan Kathy Underwood
Religious Education DLRE@ccuu.org
Community Minister Rev. Dr. C. Scot Giles
Music Director Alison Vernon
Music.Director@ccuu.org
Music Director Emeritus John Denny
Congregational Laurie Lantz
Administrator ccuu@ccuu.org
Religious Education (in search)
Assistant

Lay Ministers
Ken Bobbe, Coordinator Melanie Schikore
Karen Greenland Joy Simon
Barbara Griggs Chris Smith
For assistance from Lay or Care Ministry, please call Ken or Rev. Hilary.

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