

December 2022

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Pledging as Covenant

Every year on June 30, the last day of our fiscal year, John Doe makes a financial contribution to UUMAN. I say that John

makes a “financial contribution” rather than say that he “pays his pledge” for one simple reason – the reason is that John Doe never turns in his pledge card from the spring Stewardship campaign.

Yet because our bylaws state that one is a member of UUMAN through “making and honoring a financial pledge for the current fiscal year,” our Stewardship, Finance, Membership Teams, Care Circles, Board and others, spend the entire church year trying to determine if John Doe still wants to retain his membership at UUMAN.

Membership, Care Circles, the Board and others don’t necessarily know that John Doe makes a “financial contribution” on June 30, and because he never turns in his pledge card they must investigate.

Membership might say, “I saw him at Coffee House a couple of months ago.” Care Circles might say, “he responded to Care Circles in August, but not in October.” Someone on the Board might say, “the Breeze database says he was at Sunday service six times this past year, but not since April.” Stewardship might say, “I called him, left a message but I haven’t heard back.” Etc., etc., etc.

This newsletter article is not about money.

This newsletter article is about respecting the precious time our beloved volunteers lovingly put in to make UUMAN be the best congregation that it can be.

Unless one has served on any of the teams I’ve listed, one may not appreciate how much time, effort and energy goes into these membership investigations. And the thing is, nobody wants to do them! The passion of our volunteers is to help serve our members through connection and member engagement; not to do investigations.

I dream of a world where everyone turns in their pledge card! Yes, the thought of it makes me feel warm inside. ☐ Again, this is not about money. If the pledge card indicates that you commit to a pledge of \$1 this year, at least we know your intention to retain membership at UUMAN and we don’t have to investigate. Hooray!!!

Turning in your pledge card is acting in covenant. It is showing respect to all those who won’t have to investigate your intentions.

If you haven’t turned in your pledge card, please do so. You can find a link to our “Annual Operating Pledge Form” under the “Give” heading on the main page of our website.

Nurture our spirit. Strive for Justice. Transform the world.

Dave



Notes from the Board: UUMAN to Offer Benefits for Staff

Beginning in January 2023, UUMAN will offer a benefits package to qualified staff members. Our benefits package will include the following:

- Healthcare
- Dental and Vision
- Long-term Disability
- Term Life
- Retirement Plan

Healthcare

The UUA Health Plan is self-funded and non-profit, which helps hold down costs. The primary purpose of the UUA Health Plan is to enable congregations to provide adequate health insurance to their ministers and other staff. By pooling resources, the UUA can offer better insurance at lower costs than churches can obtain on their own.

- Yearly rate increases are lower than average market rate increases.
- All plan resources are dedicated to the benefit of plan members.
- The only cost to congregations is for their share of the premiums.

This year, we plan to pay 50% of healthcare costs for qualified staff, based on the bronze-level health plan. We will also offer the silver- and gold-level health plans. The plan requires that employees work 750 hours per year to qualify for employer contributions.

Retirement Plan

Acknowledging the inherent worth of every employee requires recognizing their needs as they transition and evolve to new chapters in life. Everyone should be able to save for their future.

The UU retirement plan is an IRS-qualified 401(a)/401(k) defined contribution, multiple-employer church retirement plan. All W-2 employees can contribute pre-tax amounts to the plan's investment options. UUMAN will contribute 5% of compensation for qualified employees—employees who work 1000 hours per year.

Long-term Disability and Term Life

UUMAN will provide 100% of these benefits for qualified staff.

Summary

The previous board deserves kudos for initiating this important step. The current board wishes to acknowledge the contributions of Margriet van de Steeg of the Personnel Committee, who was tireless in answering questions and indispensable in providing guidance and support.

Our staff is terrific, and we need to look after them. People deserve access to healthcare, protection from catastrophic illness, and to save for the future. Providing benefits makes us a more attractive workplace for existing and future staff. Beyond that, it's just the right thing to do, as we strive to live our values and make our corner of the world a better place.

-Mike Chambers, Board Vice-President

Spiritual Wisdom Studies

The next book that Spiritual Wisdom Studies will be exploring is Paganism, An Introduction to Earth-Centered Religions by Joyce and River Higginbotham. We meet on the second and fourth Sundays at 7 p.m. via Zoom for convenience and safety. We usually end by 8:15- 8 :30 p.m.. We will plan to cover one chapter each time we meet. We will start on January 8 and will discuss chapter 1 at that time.

The chapter titles are:

1. What is Paganism?
2. You are what you believe
3. A Pagan view of Deity
4. What about Satan?
5. The Living Universe
6. Magick
7. Ethics and Personal Responsibility

From Amazon: If you want to study Paganism in more detail, this book is the place to start. Based on a course in Paganism that the authors have taught for more than a decade, it is full of exercises, meditations, and discussion questions for group or individual study. This book presents the basic fundamentals of Paganism. It explores what Pagans are like; how the Pagan sacred year is arranged; what Pagans do in ritual; what magick is; and what Pagans believe about God, worship, human nature and ethics.

- For those who are exploring their own spirituality, or who want a good book to give to non-Pagan family and friends
- A hands-on learning tool with magickal workings, meditations, discussion questions, and journal exercises
- Offers in-depth discussion of ethics and magick

And from the back of the book: Paganism is a broad term that encompasses many different earth-centered paths such as Wicca, Druidism, and Asatru, whose practitioners embrace the idea that the natural world is sacred. This book is an introduction to the beliefs, ethics, and practices of modern Pagans. It answers common questions such as: What are Pagan rituals like? When are the Pagan holidays? What do Pagans believe about God? What is magick? How do Pagans view Satan? What ethics do Pagans follow? This book encourages you to explore your self, your current beliefs, and the variety of modern Pagan paths. Through the use of a workbook format, discussion questions, journal exercises, visualizations, and magickal workings, you will discover which Pagan beliefs and traditions resonate

with you. If you feel a sacred connection with the natural world and want to explore the many facets of modern Paganism, let this book be your first step on the path.

If you are interested in participating, please send an email to adultenrichment@uuman.org

~ Janet Lacey, Spiritual Wisdom Studies Facilitator

Help with Your Journey

Do you have questions about the Unitarian Universalist faith? Are you seeking ways to deepen your spiritual journey? Do you need a book to read to your child? You are invited to visit the Cynthia Prescott Library located in the Fellowship Hall for help. Choose a book, sign it out on the checkout sheet and take it home with you.

New on our shelves is "The Places that Scare You" by Pema Chodron. The description on the cover states: "We always have a choice. We can let the circumstances of our lives harden us and make us increasingly resentful and afraid, or we can let them soften us and make us kinder. Here Pema provides the tools to deal with the problems and difficulties that life throws our way."

Happy reading - Linda Etheridge

Under the Harvest Moon - What we Raised, and How to Pick Up Your Items!

We are thrilled to share with you that, TOGETHER, WE RAISED **\$21,604** on flight #007 to Paradise!!!

This is **\$4,500 MORE** than in 2021!

UUMAN has so much to be proud of. Thank you for sharing your time & treasure to benefit all at UUMAN and our wider community.

Remember that we will be available before and after service on November 13th to distribute items won from the auction. Be sure to pay your balance through Auctria before picking up your items! If you won't be at service this Sunday, email us at

harvest-moon-chair@uuman.org to let us know (if you haven't already).

- Your UTHM Tri-Chairs: Kelly Callen, Miriam Patanian, and Jennifer Phillippi

Religious Exploration News

The holidays are quickly approaching (whether we are ready or not)! And with the change in season, comes new events and activities to look forward to! While the Christmas Pageant is always a hit, there are other exciting plans in the works such as the Holiday Party, Winter traditions and crafting with the Bridged Young Adults! Here is a breakdown of everything you need to know...



UUMAN's Christmas Pageant will be on **December 24 at 4 p.m.** in the sanctuary. This year will be our first "Pop-Up" Pageant, meaning the audience will be asked to participate! There will be no cost to attend. All ages are invited to participate, there is a role for everyone both on and off stage! To get involved, contact Lexie Tangney at DRE@uuman.org

- ◆ **Sunday, December 4: UUMAN's Holiday Party!** All are invited to join us in Fellowship Hall following the service. We will do a cookie swap (and other savory treats). Bring Tupperware or other container! There will be pizza and beverages. Join the youth in decorating the Christmas tree. Play a game or two, enjoy fellowship and start the holiday season on a merry foot.
- ◆ **Sunday, December 11:** All the youth will learn about winter traditions from around the world. All are invited to join us in **Discovery Hall at 11:15 a.m.** following the service.
- ◆ **Sunday, December 18:** All the Young Adults who have bridged from UUMAN are invited to join us for the 2nd hour at **11:15 a.m. in Discovery Hall.** We will craft and play games. Parents of bridged youth—please invite your adult children to join us! We're going to have a great time and following these activities, will have **lunch together at 12:15 p.m.**
- ◆ **Saturday, December 24, Christmas Eve: Pageant at 4:00 p.m.** in the Sanctuary.
- ◆ **Sunday, December 25, Christmas Day:** There will be no Youth RE.

Last month's Autumn Festival was a wonderful production! Between the candy, games, hay rides, food and contests, it's hard to choose a favorite part of the evening. The young adults had a blast helping put it all together (and take it apart!) I'm already looking forward to next year's Autumn Festival. A big thank you to all those who helped make this event possible from planning, setting up, bringing food, volunteering at the event, and helping clean it all up.



From left to right: Michelle Liebergesell, Miguel Flores, Shelley Nigrani, Jennifer Ratcliffe



From left to right: Lexie Tangney, Lizzy Morang, Shelley Nigrani, youth (name not published for privacy), Hayden Brown

— Lexie Tangney

UUMAN's Board of Trustees uses [Covid Act Now](#) to monitor current Covid risk levels. We are thrilled to see that the counties in which the majority of us live are in the Low Risk category. Masks are optional for indoor activities, and indoor congregational singing can occur at this time. We are happy to say that UUMAN's community is highly vaccinated and boosted—thank you for doing your part to keep our risk as low as possible!

Go to uuman.org for the most recent information.

December 2022: A Month of Sundays

Date	Topic	Service Leaders
12/4	<p>"You're Blessed When...." - Jesus & The Beatitudes</p> <p>Jesus challenges our conventional wisdom when he delivers an upside-down view of what it look like to "be blessed" and live a good life.</p>	David Kroeber
12/11	<p>Service of Seasonal Music</p> <p>Bah humbug Ebenezer Scrooge! Get in the holiday spirit by joining us for a holiday celebration of music and cheer.</p>	Rev. Dave Dunn, Alex Pietsch, Chalice Choir and other wonderfully talented musicians
12/18	<p>It's Not Too Late!</p> <p>We've passed 350 ppm concentration of CO2 in the Earth's atmosphere...and the numbers continue to rise! But we're not finished yet! How can we be leaders and exemplars in reversing this trend?</p>	Rev. Dave Dunn
12/24	<p>Multigenerational Christmas Pageant (4PM)</p> <p>Join us at 4:00 PM for our annual Christmas Pageant! There will be a new twist this year. There is room in the stable for EVERYONE!</p>	Lexi Tangney
12/25	<p>Our Holiday Traditions</p> <p>What better way is there to celebrate Christmas morning than with your UUMAN friends!!!? Join us as we share our (and your) many and varied holiday traditions together.</p>	Rev. Dave Dunn & Friends



Life Celebrations

We want to commemorate the happy occasions in the lives of our UUMAN members and other friends of UUMAN. We are looking for Naming Ceremonies, Graduations, Marriages, Anniversaries, Retirements, and Birthdays. Please submit the information about your special day, in the month prior to the event, to

membership@uuman.org.

Date	Celebration
12/1	Ever B. is celebrating a birthday.
12/8	Jim N. is celebrating a birthday.
12/9	Presley C. is celebrating a birthday.
12/15	Carole H. is celebrating a birthday.
	Duco V. d. B. is celebrating a birthday.
12/17	Joaquin F. is celebrating a birthday.
	Bruce L. is celebrating a birthday.
12/28	Jacqueline G. is celebrating a birthday.

ABOUT THE UUMANTimes: The UUMANTimes is the newsletter of Unitarian Universalist Metro Atlanta North (UUMAN). We go live with each issue by the first Sunday of the month; deadline for submissions is typically on the 22nd of the month preceding the issue date. Please email your news articles and artwork to Becky at newsletter@uuman.org