

The Quest



December 2018 Services: Hope

December 2nd - Sharing Abundance, Our Hope

Our greatest hope may be the sharing of our human wealth while preserving the bounty the earth itself offers. This morning we will present the William Irvine Social Justice award to Derek Cook, Director of the Canadian Poverty Institute and recent appointee to the Federal Ministerial Advisory Committee on Poverty. Derek will share a reflection on the theme.

Service Facilitators: Derek Cook and Rev Debra Faulk

Music: Music Director Jane Perry and UUPhonia

****** A light soup and bread meal will follow the service.

Presenter: Rev Debra Faulk

Music: Maurice McAtamney with Jane Perry

December 16th - Children's Pageant

Presenters: Sheila MacMaster, Holly Noelle, Samer Khaldi, Arya Salmassi, Ben Bradt, and our RE program children and youth!

Music: Jane Perry and UUPhonia

Pageant: "A Very Commercial Christmas"

An interactive play exploring the meaning of the holiday season. Written by Ben Gaudet. Directed by Sheila MacMaster.

December 21st - Hope of the Returning Light:

Honouring Solstice 7:00 pm

On this shortest day of the year, we gather with expectation of the lengthening days to come, to celebrate the turning of the season with pagan ritual, followed by a mummer's play and wassail. Please join us one and all and bring a length of ribbon and some greenery and perhaps a few sweets to share.

Presiding: Brandis Purcell, Rev Debra Faulk and Ronnie Joy Leah

December 23rd - Season of Hope, Making It Last

This time of year is laden with messages of hope, love and peace. Cease-fires are called, and people often feel more filled with the spirit of generosity, kindness and compassion. What might it take to hold this focus and what are some concrete actions to support it?

Service Facilitators: Rev Debra Faulk and Marcia Epstein

Music: Music Director Jane Perry

Service details continued inside....

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December 9th - Hope for the Sometimes Hopeless

This morning's service will include an excerpt from "Take Me with You", a portrait of a homeless man struggling with mental health issues and the impact he has on his family. It was written by Cathy Welburn as a tribute to her late brother, Tom, who led a life on the streets.

Service Facilitators: Rev Debra Faulk and Cathy Welburn

Music: Music Director Jane Perry with special guest Skippy Drake

December 13th - 5:30 – 6:30

Hope's Longing - Blue Christmas

A special Blue Christmas service to honour the pain many feel around the holidays. The merriment of the Christmas season often reminds us of what we've lost or never had. This will be a quiet service of readings, reflections, and candle lighting, with room made to honour sorrows and pains in our lives. Rather than encouraging you to get happy or in the spirit of the season, we will honour how you are feeling in your heart, no matter what that may be.



December 24th - Oh Holy Night: Unitarian Lessons and Carols

2018 is the 200th anniversary of the carol Silent Night and our Christmas Eve service will be inspired by and filled with readings and music to honour the anniversary. The service will also include the traditional interactive 12 Days of Christmas and the candlelit Silent Night. We gather on this Christmas Eve to celebrate the essence of this holiday: kindness, compassion, sharing and the recognition of every birth, every child, everyone as a holy birth.

Service Facilitators: Rev Debra Faulk and Jeb Gaudet

Music: Music Director Jane Perry with Chor Vida

December 30th - Fire Communion: Cultivating Hope and Happiness

In order to survive, our ancestors had to be especially aware of dangers, losses and conflicts. Our human brains evolved a negativity bias that has become embedded in brain physiology. In the modern world, this bias is counterproductive to our quality of life. There is hope: our Fire Communion service will explore how we might use the latest neuroscientific research to counter this bias and influence how we experience the New Year. The service will include our traditional Fire Communion ritual.

Service Facilitator: Mary-Anna Louise Kovar

Music: Music Director Jane Perry

December 4-Others

Inn From The Cold & Calgary Interfaith Food Bank

Special 4-Others Collection for December:

December 16th: Special Mitten Tree collection - please bring mitts, gloves, scarves, hats, warm socks

Christmas Eve: Minister's Discretionary Fund



You're Invited to Christmas Dinner with Calgary Unitarians!



Hosts: Dean Kasner & Neil Morton

Tuesday, December 25th
Doors open at 4:00 Dinner at 4:30

We supply the turkey and rely on our guests for potluck trimmings.

Everyone contributes to set-up & clean-up.

Please sign up in Wickenden.



The Parliament of the World's Religions (PoWR) was held in Toronto November 1-7. The theme was "The Promise of Inclusion, the Power of Love: Pursuing Global Understanding, Reconciliation, and Change". The Parliament brought together 8,000 people from 80+ countries and 200+ spiritual traditions. It was such a rich experience, with many learning opportunities and insights. And, for me, a needed boost of hope.

The hope came from Indigenous people, primarily from Turtle Island (North America). However, the hope also came from every corner of the world. The Indigenous participants frequently articulated their appreciation for the recognition of Indigenous spirituality and how meaningful it was for them to see their spiritual traditions treated with the same importance and relevance as any other spiritual tradition.

There was an Indigenous People's Track – a day long focus with programming and ceremonies throughout the week. I was grateful to be able to complete the requirements for an Indigenous Cultural Awareness Certificate.

Hope came from listening to Maude Barlow of the Council of Canadians and the Blue Communities Project. The project is a joint initiative that furthers the work of local Water Watch coalitions across the country; and now it has expanded around the world. Water was chosen by the Canadian Unitarian Council as the justice focus for this year, so this is very timely.

Hope was also kindled in the form of a collective call to action and empowerment of the spiritual communities to address the big issues we all share as one species on this planet. While there is so much to share, one of the most poignant quotes was one I was familiar with, which now takes on a whole new meaning for me. It's from environmental scientist Gus Speth:

"I used to think that top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change. I thought that thirty years of good science could address these problems. I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy, and to deal with these we need a cultural and spiritual transformation. And we scientists don't know how to do that."

Debra's Deliberations



Their website contains an abundance of relevant material here:

<http://tinyurl.com/ycg9vxi4>

These ideas will certainly find their way into my services.

I attended a series of 4 workshops collectively titled **Ecological Civilization**. The reading list from those sessions will be some of my sabbatical reading and pondering. The over-arching premise is that we are on the brink of radical change and how we can be agents for a sustainable future.

Speaking of sabbatical, a few folks have asked about the sabbaticals I take. My letter of call includes 1 month of sabbatical for each year worked. This contractual agreement with most full-time ministers recognizes that this work is rarely limited to usual work week hours, that there is a need for 'time away' for reflection, rejuvenation and discernment – a time to read some of the books and resources that could be so useful – time to reimagine one's ministry by having the space and time to do so. Sometimes these are 4+ months like the first one I took after 6 years. When I returned from that 4 months away, I reflected with the Committee on Shared Ministry and the Board and we drew up a plan for shorter and more frequent sabbaticals. I have discovered that this is becoming more and more common. There are practical reasons that include resource management (there isn't the need to hire a sabbatical replacement minister for less than 2 months) and the added workload for volunteers is lightened. What I have found now having done a 4 month and a 1.5 month is that the shorter more frequent sabbaticals mean that I have been able to focus on learning and research that is timely. I will be on sabbatical January and February 2019.

May this season of Hope be present in your lives and may it continue to inspire what we do as a beloved community.

Namaste,
Debra



Splinters from the Board

I hope you have had a chance to consider the Right Relations questions published in the November Quest. are interested in your perceptions- which of the questions can you relate to the most; which are the hardest to manage; what do we do best overall; what do we need to improve? Keeping these thoughts in mind will help us all prepare to contribute to the work of developing our covenant in the New Year.

In January, Rev. Debra will begin sabbatical. I have been asked questions regarding the frequency of sabbaticals. Taking shorter sabbaticals more often was negotiated by the Board because covering shorter absences is less costly financially and is easier for the congregation to manage in many ways.

I am looking forward to seeing you at our Congregational Meeting December 2nd at noon!

Mary-Anna Louise Kovar

President, Board of Trustees



Operation Cookie:

Calling All Holiday Bakers and Delivery People!

For the fifth year, the Membership Committee is organizing Operation Cookie. We're sending Christmas cookies to members of our congregation who would appreciate some home baking and Christmas wishes. We are looking for more bakers to join us in making cookies. Please bring your cookies to church on Sunday December 16 before the service. We will package them up and have them delivered that day or in the days following. If you can deliver cookies stop by our table after the service on the 16th. Please help us continue a memorable holiday tradition this year!





♪ UpBeat News with Jane Perry ♪

December is a wonderful month for choral music, with concerts and carolling all over the city. Give your spirit the gift of music this holiday season and get yourself out to a concert!



Resident choirs in concert!

Sunday, December 2 at 7:30pm: **Calgary Renaissance Singers & Players** present "A Christmas Pilgrimage", with guests John van Leeuwen (recorder) and Joan Kent (viola da gamba.) Conducted by Jane Perry. Pre-concert talk at 7:00pm. St. Stephen's Anglican Church (1121 14 Avenue SW.) Tickets and info: www.renaissance-singers.com

Wednesday, December 5 at 12:10pm. **Calgary Renaissance Singers & Players** perform a free noon-hour concert as part of the long-running ProArts@Noon concert series. The programme will include Renaissance Christmas music and audience singalong carols. Conducted by Jane Perry. Cathedral Church of the Redeemer (604 1 Street SE.)

Saturday, December 8 at 7:30pm. **One Voice Chorus** presents "Sugar: The Concert", with guest ensemble the **BarberEllas**. An upbeat programme with shiny Christmas classics, music about candy, and some lullabies, too. Conducted by Jane Perry. St. Stephen's Anglican Church (1121 14 Avenue SW.) Tickets and info: www.onevoicechorus.ca

Saturday, December 15 at 2:00pm. **Vocal Latitudes** presents "Ring Them Bells!", with Bell Epoque Handbell Choir and other musical guests. Conducted by Frank Rackow. Calgary Unitarians. Check out the Vocal Latitudes Facebook page for more information: www.facebook.com/Vocal.Latitudes/



And on Christmas Eve...

Monday, December 24 at 7:00pm at Calgary Unitarians. Unitarian Lessons & Carols, with stories from Rev. Debra Faulk and friends, choral music from Chor Vida, and lots of congregational carols. Join us for this most magical service.



Religious Exploration Program

CYRE Monthly Fun Friday Movies for Everyone!!

Hosted by the Children and Youth RE Program.

December 14th – Family Movie:

The Muppet Christmas Carol. See the Fun Friday page for more details of what promises to be an outstanding night for all!



January 18th – Youth Choice: Love, Simon. A 2018 movie that has won a number of awards. Simon Spier keeps a huge secret from his family, his friends and all of his classmates: he's gay. When that secret is threatened, Simon must face everyone and come to terms with his identity.

CYRE Fun Friday Movie Dates – Everyone Welcome!

December 14th – Family: The Muppet Christmas Carol

January 18th – Youth Choice: Love, Simon

February 8th - Family Movie Night





The Irvine Social Justice Award Winner for 2018: Derek Cook



This year's Irvine Social Justice Award recipient is Derek Cook. He has over twenty-five years' experience developing policy and programs in the public and non-profit sectors. From 2011 to 2015, he served as Executive Director of the Calgary Poverty Reduction Initiative (CPRI), Mayor Nenshi's task force on poverty reduction. Under Cook's leadership the CPRI spent 18 months in consultation with local communities to develop Calgary's Enough for All poverty reduction strategy. Derek is currently the Director of Canadian Poverty Institute (CPI) at Ambrose University and was recently appointed to the Federal Ministerial Advisory Committee on Poverty. He has been described as "a man of deep faith and untiring passion for the work of poverty. "

Background Notes on The William Irvine Justice Award

Calgary Unitarians is privileged to celebrate our tradition of social justice work and advocacy with the awarding of the annual William Irvine Justice Award honouring his life and legacy. The award honours a person or organization for extraordinary contributions benefiting social and /or environmental justice in the Calgary community.

The reward's inspiration, William Irvine, 1885-1962, was the minister of the First Unitarian Church of Calgary from 1916 to 1919. He was a boldly independent theological thinker, an activist for social justice, and a successful political organizer. William Irvine an effective propagandist and public speaker, and a thoughtful social theorist. He was one of the first two self-proclaimed socialists to be elected to Parliament, and co-founder of the Commonwealth Co-operative Association (CCF), the forerunner of today's New Democratic Party, the NDP.



May his story and his influence continue to inspire Calgarians now and in the future.



Fun Fridays Are Here!

Fun Fridays are a chance to deepen relationships and build our Beloved Community. The goal of these programs is to socialize, laugh and learn together. Your Board of Trustees is sponsoring the Fun Fridays, but they need your help. We would like to see something happening every Friday evening at CUU: movies, karaoke, game nights or potlucks; the only limit is your imagination! Interested in being part of the coordinating team? Got an idea for a Fun Friday? Talk with any Board member or Rev Debra. Here is what's on the menu for December's Fun Fridays:

Host: Ned Leavitt

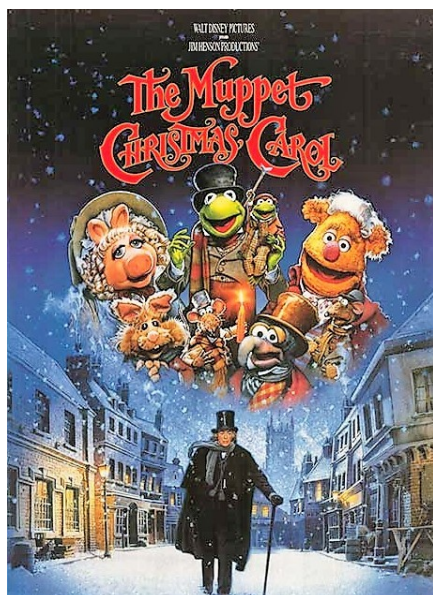
December 7th Karaoke Night: Come for an evening of singing and good cheer

December 14th Christmas Family Movie Night: The Muppet Christmas Carol

December 21st Solstice Ritual & Mummers Play: Celebrate the turning of the season with a pagan ritual, mummer's play, and wassail.

December 28th No Fun Friday activities

WHAT
HAPPENS
AT
KARAOKE
STAYS
AT
KARAOKE



December 14th – Family Movie: The Muppet Christmas Carol

The Muppet characters tell their version of the classic tale of an old and bitter miser's redemption on Christmas Eve. The movie stars the Muppets. Wear your PJ's and bring a stuffed animal, blanket or a comfy pillow to sit on. Both chairs and upfront floor seating will be available. Don't forget your loose change to support our Fabulous Snack Bar! Offerings include: juice, pop, chips, popcorn, baked treats, tea, and our seasonal Super Fancy Hot Chocolate! (Dairy free option available).

All snack proceeds from the Fabulous Snack Bar will go towards the purchase of our very own professional popcorn machine!



We're Planning a Pur(se)poseful Christmas!



This year we will support an Indigenous lead initiative to gather new/nearly-new/no longer used purses. The idea is to fill them with essentials, plus a little extra, then distribute them to women currently homeless or living on the streets.

The goal is to fill 100 purses for 100 women – let's help make it happen!

The initiative is looking for donations of:

- Toiletries: toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, conditioner, soap, sanitary napkins, combs, brushes, hair ties
- Clothing: new underwear and socks, gloves or mitts, toques, scarves
- Gift cards: \$5 - \$10 denominations for McDonald's, Tim Horton's, Co-op, etc.

We're also hoping to supply a few snack items and a small gift in each purse.

The goal is to collect these items by December 14th. The purses will be sorted and filled for delivery on December 21st, Winter Solstice.

Please place donations under the wooden Food Bank box in the Barker Room by December 14th.



Join Us for December's Pub Night...



When: December 5th from 7:00-9:30pm

Where: Kensington Pub- 207 10A St. NW

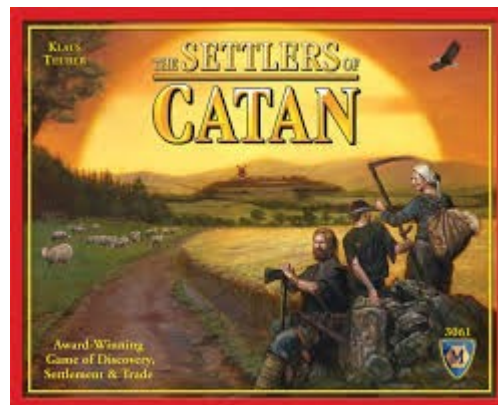
www.kensingtonpub.com

Come out for a night of great conversation at one of Calgary's most iconic pubs. The menu is very inclusive, complete with gluten free and vegetarian options.

Pub Nights are held on the first Wednesday of every month. Hope to see YOU there!

Young Adults Board Games Day

When: December 20th from 2:00-6:00pm



Have you ever wondered if there is more to tabletop gaming than Scrabble, Monopoly or Risk? Come connect with the young(ish) adults in your community with some games, snacks, conversation and laughter! We will have all of this and more. Please feel free to bring a favourite board game and a snack or drink to share.



THR Bulletin Board

The dedicated bulletin board in Wickenden has ideas of movie, videos as well as books. We are also striving to post opportunities for engaging with the Indigenous community directly for it is in these encounters and relationships that the deepest learning and trust building happens.

You are invited to engage in Indigenous awareness where ever you are in the process.

About 10 people, including a few from Wild Rose United, attended the viewings of APTN's First Contact (3-45-minute episodes) and found them thought-provoking. They are available to watch online for then next few months, consider doing so.

Blue Christmas Service 5:30 – 6:30 pm

December 13th Our annual special service to honour the pain many feel around the holidays. A quiet service of readings, reflections, and candle lighting that honours how you are feeling in your heart, no matter what that may be. A light meal will follow the service.





What Does It Mean to Be A People of Hope?

Faith, wherever it develops into hope, causes not rest but unrest, not patience but impatience. It does not calm the unquiet heart but is itself this unquiet heart in [all of us]. Those who hope...can no longer put up with reality as it is, but begin to suffer under it, to contradict it. [True hope] means conflict with the world, for the goad of the promised future stabs inexorably into the flesh of every unfulfilled present."

Jürgen Moltmann, Theologian

It's not always easy to hear well this time of year, especially when it comes to hope. The dominant messages are about hope offering us calm: "The light will come." "A new day is on its way." "Justice and joy are growing in the womb and will soon be born." Hope, from this point of view, is a voice that reassures. It's a welcomed whisper that says, "Yes, the sky may be dark now. Yes, the road you're on at this moment may be hard. But trust me, just over that horizon, there's a new world waiting for us all."

This soothing message comes to us as a gift. During dark days, we all get tired. The fruits of our efforts are hard to see. We feel alone. However, the promise that things will change offers us relief. We are released from the burden of believing that "it is all up to me" or that it all must be solved now.

It's a beautiful and needed message. But, as Moltmann and others remind us, it's also only half of what hope is trying to say. Hope doesn't just whisper "It *will* be different," it also shouts, "It *should* be different" and "It *can* be different." Yes, it speaks soothing words about trusting and waiting, but it also takes the form of a holy impatience that declares, "Enough is enough. The time is now!" As Moltmann puts it, hope is not just that which calms the unquiet heart; it also *is* the unquiet heart.

In other words, hope doesn't just promise us that change will come; it also changes who we are in the present. When we believe that a new day is dawning, we don't just sit down and wait. We get up and go out to meet the light. When hope convinces us that there are unseen forces working for the good, we begin to look around more closely, and in doing so we notice that darkness and pain are not all that is there. When hope's holy impatience gets into our bones, we start acting as if we deserve that new day **now**. Which in turn changes others by convincing them that we all have waited long enough.

Bottom line: listening fully to hope makes you dangerous, not just soothed! It doesn't relieve us of duty as much as it reminds us that the wind is at our back and unseen reinforcements are at our side. Yes, hope reassures, but it also emboldens. It doesn't just offer us a promise; it gives us a push.

But all of this happens only if we listen fully. So maybe the most important question this month is:
"Are we listening to everything hope has to say?"



Our Spiritual Exercise

Spreading Our Stories of Hope

Instead of options this month, we are all invited to do one single exercise together:

Spend some time remembering how you've been saved by hope.

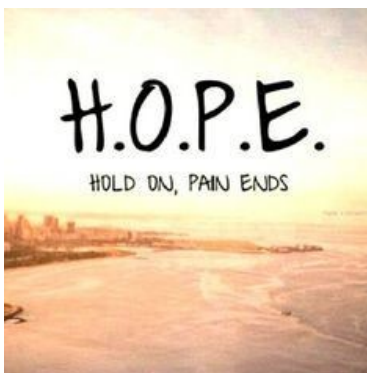
And then bring that story of hope to your group to share.

Hope rarely descends or magically appears. Most often, it's passed on. It comes to us as a gift. We don't find it, as much as we receive it. And almost always, that gift comes in the form of a story. Hearing tales of others finding their way through the dark helps us trust that light is waiting at the end our tunnels as well. Listening to others talk about their sources of hope helps us notice the many resources available to us. Simply put, hope can't spread without our stories. Light doesn't travel through the dark on its own. It hitchhikes on the tales we tell each other.

This month let's give each other the gift of hope by sharing the gift of our stories. We all have them. Some of us will talk about that person whose belief in us enabled us to believe in ourselves. Others will talk about how they held on through depression for the sake of their kids. More than one of us will name that moment when we realized that the darkness was not our enemy but contained a gift. At least one of us will likely talk about the magic of "fake it 'til you make it." Still others may share their experience of stumbling upon one of those beautiful "[It Gets Better](#)" videos. In the end, the details of the stories are less important than the act of bringing them all into the room. Surrounded by each other's stories, the circle can't help but be lit up.

Besides bringing a personal story of hope to your group, consider also bringing in a symbol/token that represents the essence of your story. You might also want to keep that symbol/token close to you during the weeks before your meeting, as a way of both helping you remember the details and offering gratitude.

During your group session, after everyone has shared their story, be sure to leave time for everyone to talk about what happened as the many stories of others washed over them.





“Extra Credit” Exercise: A Week’s Worth of Hopeful Words

If you have the time for and interest in an additional spiritual practice this month, consider weaving the following poems into your daily meditation, journaling or walking practice. Focus on a different one each day. Consider the practice of reading through the poem 2-3 times, choosing a different focus question for each reading. For instance, when reading through it the first time, simply ask yourself, “What line or phrase pops out for me?” On your second reading, ask yourself, “Who or what am I in the poem?” Other focus questions might be: “What is the poem asking me to do today?” or “Who is the poem asking me to engage in a new way?”

Here’s the list of poems we recommend, but of course alter as needed:

MONDAY

Hope, by Lisel Mueller

<https://tinyurl.com/yc9wq372>

TUESDAY

Sweet Darkness, by David Whyte

<https://tinyurl.com/y7l7dzen>

WEDNESDAY

The Winter of Listening, by David Whyte

<https://tinyurl.com/y9l4qsh8>

THURSDAY

Hope, An Owner’s Manual, by Barbara Kingsolver

Found [here](#) and

<https://tinyurl.com/ycbh587b>

FRIDAY

Still the Moon Increases, by Nancy Shaffer

<https://tinyurl.com/yavqo9eI>

SATURDAY

What is Hope?, by Rubem A. Alves, Brazilian liberation theologian

<https://tinyurl.com/yd2q7m7q>



Your Question

As always, 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 of these questions is not to help you analyze what hope means in the abstract, but to figure out what being "a person of hope" means for you and your daily living. So, which question is calling to you? Which one contains "your work," and Life's invitation?

1. What if your darkness is not the darkness of the tomb, but instead the darkness of the womb? What if this pain of yours is not about death and loss, but new life trying to be born? Could it be that Life - like any good midwife - is calling you to "breathe and push"?
2. Who is hope for you? Whose way of being in the world helps you believe that tomorrow will be better? What are you doing to ensure that their inspiration remains front-and-center rather than faded and far away?
3. What might it mean for you to "be hope"? It's one thing to believe in hope; it's quite another to become it.
4. Are you bringing more hope into the world than you realize? Are you sure that your everyday commitments and work couldn't be viewed as "bringing hope into the world"? If you don't think of your work and commitments in that way, how might life look different if you did?
5. Are you hopeless? Or have you let someone *take away* your hope? Have you allowed someone's betrayal to convince you that the world is darker than it really is?
6. Are you sure hope abandoned you? Or did your *preferred* dream just not occur? What if hope is waiting for you in a new and unexpected form?
7. Why are you keeping your hopes so small? Are you really going to let that past disappointment dictate the size of your dreams?
8. Are you calling yourself a cynic? What if you're really a disappointed idealist underneath? Is your cynicism making you feel sane or suffocated?
9. Is hope trying to sooth your heart or disturb it? Is there a holy impatience inside you that is tired of waiting? Is hope itself telling you, "Stop hoping! Start acting, demanding, doing!"
10. Are you clear about the responsibility we have for our grandchildren's hopes?
11. What if hope doesn't swoop in and wipe away all the pain? What if hope is you standing squarely inside the pain and saying to it, "You are not the full story"?

What's your question? Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.



Companion Pieces

Recommended Resources for Exploration and Reflection

The below recommended resources are not “required reading.” We will not analyze these pieces at our small group meeting. Instead they are here to companion you on your personal journey this month, get your thinking started, and open you to new ways of thinking about what it means to be a people of Hope.

Word Roots

From Old English/Frisian *hopa* meaning to wish for, to desire, to have confidence in the future.

The word despair comes from the Latin root *de* - without, and *sper* - hope.

Wise Words

Hope

Lisel Mueller

Full poem found [here](#)

“...It is the singular gift
we cannot destroy in ourselves,
the argument that refutes death,
the genius that invents the future,
all we know of God.

It is the serum which makes us swear
not to betray one another;
it is in this poem, trying to speak.”

Hope begins in the dark, it’s a stubborn hope that if you just
show up and try to do the right thing, the dawn will come.
You wait and watch *and work!*

Anne Lamott

Hope has to be seen to be believed. It has to be made visible.
It has to be something we can feel and touch. We are called
to be persons who embody hope for one another. We have
to be each other’s partners in hope.

Paul Wadell, theologian

Critical thinking without hope is cynicism. Hope without
critical thinking is naïveté.

Maria Popava

Hope is the salve that keeps our broken hearts soft.

Ann Voskamp

Despair is anger with no place to go. Hope is the feeling we
have that the feeling we have is not permanent.

Mignon McLaughlin

The Sun will rise and set regardless. What we choose to do
with the light while it's here is up to us. Journey wisely.

Alexandra Elle

Hope also has something to do with presence -- not a future
good outcome, but the immediate experience of being met,
held in communion, by something intimately at hand.

Cynthia Bourgeault

There is something compelling about the fact that Christmas
comes, no matter what. The celebration of the birth of Jesus
comes, no matter the season of your heart. The Prince of Peace,
the baby that would bring a message of universal equality,
compassion, forgiveness, and love is reborn again and again and
again, no matter our state-of-mind or being...indeed, in spite of
it. Perhaps that is the real miracle of the season, that hope and
possibility cannot be denied.

Cynthia Frado

You can cut all the flowers but you cannot keep Spring from
coming.

Pablo Neruda

“The future is dark. But my faith dares me to ask: What if this
darkness is not the darkness of the tomb, but the darkness
of the womb? What if our America is not dead but a country
still waiting to be born? What if the story of America is one
long labor? What if all the mothers who came before us, who
survived genocide and occupation, slavery and Jim Crow,
racism and xenophobia and Islamophobia, political
oppression and sexual assault, are standing behind us now,
whispering in our ear: You are brave? What if this is our
Great Contraction before we birth a new future? Remember
the wisdom of the midwife: “Breathe,” she says.
Then: “Push.” ...”

Valarie Kaur, A Sikh Prayer for America



The Winter of Listening

David Whyte

Full poem found [here](#)

"...What disturbs
and then nourishes
has everything
we need..."

Sweet Darkness

David Whyte

Full poem found [here](#)

"When your eyes are tired
the world is tired also.
When your vision has gone
no part of the world can find you.
Time to go into the dark
where the night has eyes
to recognize its own.
There you can be sure
you are not beyond love..."

The day widened, pulled from both ends by the shrinking dark, as if darkness itself were a pair of hands and daylight a skein between them, a flexible membrane, and the hands that had pressed together all winter — praying, paralyzed with foreboding — now flung wide open.

Annie Dillard

Hope is a touch of graceful humor, no matter what's occurring. The ability to laugh, the ability to see the ridiculous, the ability not to tense up too much, when things become impossible, just to face them anyhow. A touch of humor. Let's say laughter through the flame... That's hope: Humor, guts, and courage, no matter the odds

Charles Bukowski

Scratch a cynic and you will find a disappointed idealist.

George Carlin

For comfortably situated people, hopelessness means cynicism and letting oneself off the hook. If everything is doomed, then nothing is required.

Rebecca Solnit, *The Case for Hope*

The message of the Incarnation is not to behold an innocent baby resplendent in inertia, but rather to take sides with a God who agitates for reform and shatters the status quo.

Doris Donnelly

Change and hope come from the margins.

Krista Tippet

Despair is often premature: it's a form of impatience as well as certainty. My favorite comment about political change comes from Zhou En-Lai, the premier of the People's Republic of China under Chairman Mao. Asked in the early 1970s about his opinion of the French Revolution, he reportedly answered, "Too soon to tell."

Rebecca Solnit, *The Case for Hope*

The danger of hopelessness is that we can lose each other. In times of hopelessness, it's easy to get scared of everything and everyone. It's easy to start believing that your neighbor is the problem and that hoarding is a better strategy than generosity. The problem is that when community starts to break down, we lose the most important source of hope we have: each other.

Rev. Sean Parker Dennison

Everything changes: there lies most of our hope and some of our fear.... If you take the long view, you'll see how startlingly, how unexpectedly but regularly things change. Not by magic, but by the incremental effect of countless acts of courage, love, and commitment, the small drops that wear away stones and carve new landscapes, and sometimes by torrents of popular will that change the world suddenly. To say that is not to say that it will all come out fine in the end regardless. I'm just telling you that everything is in motion, and sometimes we are ourselves that movement.

Rebecca Solnit, *The Case for Hope*

Faith, wherever it develops into hope, causes not rest but unrest, not patience but impatience. It does not calm the unquiet heart, but is itself this unquiet heart in [all of us]. Those who hope...can no longer put up with reality as it is, but begin to suffer under it, to contradict it. [True hope] means conflict with the world, for the goad of the promised future stabs inexorably into the flesh of every unfulfilled present."

Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*

The message of the Incarnation is not to behold an innocent baby resplendent in inertia, but rather to take sides with a God who agitates for reform and shatters the status quo.

Doris Donnelly

Change and hope come from the margins. **Krista Tippet**

Don't think that your hopes are too audacious. God's hopes for the world are even more audacious than you can imagine. Mary thought it audacious that God should choose her to carry God's hope for the world, but it was true. The same is true of us.

Steve Garnaas-Holmes, *unfolding light*



What is Hope?

Rubem A. Alves, Brazilian liberation theologian

"It is a presentiment that imagination is more real and reality less real than it looks.

It is a hunch

that the overwhelming brutality of facts

that oppress and repress is not the last word.

It is a suspicion

that reality is more complex

than realism wants us to believe

and that the frontiers of the possible

are not determined by the limits of the actual..."

Living hopefully is not devoid of pain. Living hopefully means residing squarely inside of pain, naming it as real and still saying to it "You're not the only story to tell."

Moral courage [video](#)

To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness. What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places – and there are so many – where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction. And if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory.

Howard Zinn

Look at the facts of the world. You see a continual and progressive triumph of the good. I do not pretend to understand the moral universe; the arc is a long one, my eye reaches but little ways; I cannot calculate the curve and complete the figure by the experience of sight; I can divine it by conscience. And from what I see I am sure it bends towards justice.

Theodore Parker

Hope comes from looking back and knowing we are on that arc... *Hope comes from looking forward and knowing can we harness the collective power of [the community around us]...* Hope comes from looking [deeply] and knowing we can change, and grow.

Rev. Jay Wolin

Advent: the time to listen for footsteps – you can't hear footsteps when you're running yourself. **Bill McKibben**

"We are not saints, we are not heroes. Our lives are lived in the quiet corners of the ordinary. We build tiny hearth fires, sometimes barely strong enough to give off warmth. But to the person lost in the darkness, our tiny flame may be the road to safety, the path to salvation. It is not given us to know who is lost in the darkness that surrounds us or even if our light is seen. We can only know that against even the smallest of lights, darkness cannot stand. A sailor lost at sea can be guided home by a single candle. A person lost in a wood can be led to safety by a flickering flame. It is not an issue of quality or intensity or purity. It is simply an issue of the presence of light."

Kent Nerburn

Agent Smith: Why, Mr. Anderson? Why do you do it? Why get up? Why keep fighting? Do you believe you're fighting for something? For more than your survival? Can you tell me what it is? Do you even know? Is it freedom? Or truth? Perhaps peace? Could it be for love? Illusions, Mr. Anderson. Vagaries of perception. The temporary constructs of a feeble human intellect trying desperately to justify an existence that is without meaning or purpose. And all of them as artificial as the Matrix itself. Although, only a human mind could invent something as insipid as love. You must be able to see it, Mr. Anderson. You must know it by now. You can't win. It's pointless to keep fighting. Why, Mr. Anderson, Why? Why do you persist?

Neo ("Mr. Anderson"): Because I choose to.

From the movie, *Matrix Revolutions*

Hope opens us to the future but releases us into the present. Advent draws our eyes toward the horizon as we watch and wait for the Christ who comes to us... Instead of luring us away from the present, however, Advent invites us more deeply into it, where the kingdom of God is at work even now. This is the nature of the hope that Advent cultivates in us. Rich with memory and infused with expectation, hope calls and enables us to work here and now, in company with the [Sacred that] is already about the work of heaven in our midst.

Jan Richardson, from *Circle of Grace*

I still value hope, but I see it as only part of what's required, a starting point. Think of it as the match but not the tinder or the blaze. To matter, to change the world, you also need devotion and will and you need to act. Hope is only where it begins.

Rebecca Solnit, from *The Case for Hope*

Advent is a season that seeks to build a world fit for the arrival of a child. **Rev. Dwight Welch**



The season of Advent means there is something on the horizon the likes of which we have never seen before... .What is possible is to not see it, to miss it, to turn just as it brushes past you. And you begin to grasp what it was you missed, like Moses in the cleft of the rock, watching God's [back] fade in the distance. So stay. Sit. Linger. Tarry. Ponder. Wait. Behold. Wonder. There will be time enough for running. For rushing. For worrying. For pushing. For now, stay. Wait. Something is on the horizon.

Jan L. Richardson, *Night Visions: Searching the Shadows of Advent and Christmas*

Advent is a time of anticipation and waiting... [but it] is not the silencing and oppressive, "Wait," told to the activist, but rather the internal preparation of holding stillness and building strength before action. If we need to wait, let it be the waiting of a farmer who knows that deep below the earth, her seeds are sprouting their roots. Let it be the waiting of a musician, who knows to count to just the right moment to strike the bell. Let it be the waiting of self-care, knowing that one's body and spirit needs times of activity, and times of rest, in order to be effective.

Rev. Christina Shu

Songs and Music

A Change Is Gonna Come

Sam Cooke

<https://tinyurl.com/ycno8qd7>

We Shall Overcome

Mahalia Jackson

<https://tinyurl.com/z7cdmrc>

Tyrants Always Fall

The Nields

<https://tinyurl.com/y9d2yvye>

One Day

Matisyahu

<https://tinyurl.com/d26jeo2>

<https://tinyurl.com/n4r7yzv> (acoustic)

Bird of Sorrow

Glen Hansard

<https://tinyurl.com/y7dr22vl>

"Even if a day feels too long,
and you feel like you can't wait another one
and you're slowly giving up on everything,
love is gonna find you again
Love is gonna find you, you'd better be ready then..."

Hey World (Don't Give Up)

Michael Franti

<https://tinyurl.com/y82kbhjq>

<https://tinyurl.com/ybtzxv77> (acoustic)

"Hey world, what you say
Should I stick around for another day or two?
Don't give up on me, I won't give up on you
Just believe in me like I believe in you..."

I Hope

Dixie Chicks

<https://tinyurl.com/y8lk7sa9>

Here Comes the Sun

The Beatles

<https://tinyurl.com/k82vkz3>

Blackbird

The Beatles

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zlguktsfr7k>

Sunshine

Ryan Bingham

<https://tinyurl.com/ycsecek3>

Tomorrow Will Be Kinder (From **The Hunger Games** soundtrack) **The Secret Sisters**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T1R7tyuLpI0>

Black clouds are behind me, I now can see ahead
Often I wonder why I try; hoping for an end
Sorrow weighs my shoulders down
And trouble haunts my mind
But I know the present will not last
And tomorrow will be kinder

Tomorrow will be kinder

It's true, I've seen it before

A brighter day is coming my way

Yes, tomorrow will be kinder



Seasonal Songs

Within Our Darkest Night You Kindle A Fire that Never Dies Away

Charles Pope - Taize

<https://tinyurl.com/y8td8jdd>

The Christians and the Pagans

Dar Williams

<https://tinyurl.com/bjtz86g>

Interview about the song: <https://tinyurl.com/y8xw4zy8>

Solstice Carole

Wyrd Sisters

<https://tinyurl.com/y8ytsq3z>

Solstice Night

S J Tucker

<https://tinyurl.com/y7f9l25c>

"Our hearts bring back the light as all the earth must do. May stars fill up our sight with wishes coming true..."

Videos

Whether You Believe You Can or Believe You Can't, You're Right!

Kyle Maynard - Big Think

<https://tinyurl.com/ydz588sn>

"When you have hope, you start looking for all the evidence as to why you are going to succeed; when you lack hope, then you start looking for all the reason as to why you're going to fail."

The Hopeful Darkness of the Womb

Valarie Kaur at Watch Night Service 2016

<https://tinyurl.com/ybsyp5p8>

"The future is dark. But my faith dares me to ask: What if this darkness is not the darkness of the tomb, but the darkness of the womb?..."

Beyond Hope - Derrick Jenson

<https://tinyurl.com/ycp68ani>

Reaching beyond hope to commitment

I Believe in Hope! (some explicit language)

Joanna Hoffman

<https://tinyurl.com/cawva22>

"The truth is I pretend to be a cynic but I am really a dreamer who is terrified of wanting something she may never get..."
Maybe hope is stupid.

What Is Advent Again?

<https://tinyurl.com/ybwld7kv>

The Hope for a More Simple & Meaningful Christmas

<https://tinyurl.com/y6upmzr7>

Articles

The Place Beyond Fear and Hope

Margaret Wheatley

<https://tinyurl.com/yal5rqht>

"Rudolf Bahro, a prominent German activist and iconoclast, describes the first step: "When the forms of an old culture are dying, the new culture is created by a few people who are not afraid to be insecure."... I don't know what Bahro meant by "insecure"; however, I've noted that those who endure, who have stamina for the long haul and become wiser in their actions over time, are those who are not attached to outcomes. They don't seek security in plans or accomplishments. They exchange certainty for curiosity, fear for generosity. They plunge into the problem, treat their attempts as experiments, and learn as they go. This kind of insecurity is energizing..."

Reflection: We've Hoped Our Way Into Our Current Crisis

Miguel Clark Mallet

<https://tinyurl.com/y9xuvpzm>

"We're urged to embrace hope as an antidote. Hope for a brighter day. Hope for justice. Hope for peace. Hope that compassion will win out. But speaking for myself, I'm giving up hope. Not that I don't understand the impulse. It's tempting to think that looking to the future will get me through hardship. But in my life's struggles, hope hasn't worked out that way. Too often hope has hardened into anticipation and expectation for specific outcomes..."

Books

Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities

Rebecca Solnit Essay from the book found [here](#)

Darkness Before Dawn: Redefining the Journey Through Depression -Tami Simon (Editor)

Excerpt found [here](#) - interview with Parker Palmer

The Handmaid's Tale - Margaret Atwood

Review: <https://tinyurl.com/jlodx9l>



Movies and Television

The Shawshank Redemption

<https://tinyurl.com/yCHF3ycv>

Andy says to Red, his friend and fellow prisoner, "You need it so you don't forget there are things in this world not carved out of gray stone. There is something inside that they can't get to - they can't touch - it's yours."

Red asks, "What are you talking about?"

Andy replies, "Hope."

Time to Choose

<https://tinyurl.com/yahp25bl>

"A hopeful and helpful look at the positive efforts all around the world to stop the progression of climate change."

Children of Men

<https://tinyurl.com/hhz7hfk>

Places in the Heart

<https://tinyurl.com/y9d2f2yh>

Hope Springs

<https://tinyurl.com/y8pspnom>

It's a Wonderful Life

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0038650/>

Slumdog Millionaire

<https://youtu.be/AlzbwV7on6Q>

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Soul Matters

Packets are for use by member congregations of the Soul Matters Sharing Circle.

Learn how to join at <http://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/>

Theme Based Ministry

Each month our Sunday services hold the focus of an overarching topic/theme, such as integrity, compassion, or joy. The presenters approach each month's theme in a variety of ways, all with the intention of taking us deeper.

The themes are presented for contemplation on Sunday mornings and in the monthly Reflections section of the Quest. This material provides an opportunity for personal exploration of the theme with spiritual practices, questions, reading and other resources. The other component of Theme Based Ministry are the small discussion groups, Theme Based Listening Circles (TLCs).

Theme Based Listening Circles (TLCs)

TLCs are facilitated small groups of up to 10 people. They meet at various times toward the end of each month to reflect together on the theme of the month.

These groups offer the opportunity for deepening relationships, self-awareness, enhancing listening skills, personal growth and spiritual development. You can register for a group on the website. For further information contact are@calgaryunitarians.ca

Current Groups meet:

4th Thursday of the month 12:30 – 2:30

4th Sunday of the month 12:00 – 2:00



Time and Talent Auction 2019



What Time or Talent Can You Donate?

It's time to start thinking about our winter 2019 silent auction - what time or talent can you donate?

The annual Time and Talent Auction is a fundraiser for our community that invites members to share what they have with others in the community through a silent auction.

Last year, there were fantastic art lessons, beautiful handmade objects, delicious meals, adventurous outings, and many other great opportunities to get to know members of our community.

What can you offer for the Winter 2019 Time and Talent silent auction?

You most likely have a service or talent you have not considered, but that would be valued by someone else. What about donating chess or bridge lessons, or a learn to knit session? What about delicious baked goods (and maybe even the recipe)? Or dog-, house-, or baby-sitting services?

Blank Bidding Sheets are available in Wickenden on the bulletin board and on our website. Just complete the upper section and put it in the auction mailbox in the church office. Bidding for this year's auction will be held on three consecutive Sundays: January 27, February 3, and February 10.

Questions, ideas, donations, or interested in volunteering with the auction?

Talk to Lisa Hurrle or Jeb Gaudet or email lisaphurrle@gmail.com or jebgaudet@gmail.com



Christmas is Coming - Order Your Co-Op Cards Now!



Order your Co-op Cards! The "Season of Giving" is approaching, and Co-op cards make fantastic gifts for family and friends. Did you know that our Co-op gift cards are accepted across Western Canada, wherever there is a Co-op that is part of the Federated Cooperatives Ltd? Easy to use for groceries, gas or to stock up the liquor cabinet!

When you spend \$100, you get a \$100 gift card, so it costs you NOTHING extra to purchase and use a gift card. But the more cards WE sell, the more Co-op donates back to the church. Win-win!!

Place your December Gift Card order on or before Sunday, December 2nd.

**Pick up your order the following Sunday, December 9th.
We accept cheques, cash, or e-transfer; postdated cheques are welcome!**

Here's how it works:

1. On the first Sunday of the month, using cash, cheque, or e-transfer, place your order at the table in Wickenden Hall before or after the service. If you are not attending the service on the first Sunday of the month, you can leave postdated cheques in the Co-op Card/Fruitcake Cheques mail slot in the administration office or fill in the e-transfer pledge form that you'll find in that mail slot. Please specify if any of the cards will be liquor cards, as they are separate from food & gas.
2. The gift cards will be distributed on the second Sunday of the month. If you are unable to pick up your cards on that day, you can collect them on the next Sunday.
3. Use the gift cards like cash when you make purchases at Calgary Co-op. You receive immediate cash discounts with gas purchases that can be used in Co-op grocery stores; cards must be redeemed inside the gas bar when purchasing gas. When you become a member of the Calgary Co-op you also receive dividends at the end of each year. It's just that easy!

Any questions? Contact: Ev Dewar ev.dewar@kogawa.com, Sheila Ward sggward@shaw.ca, Alex Russell itfromblighty@gmail.com





Panabaker Award – Nominations Needed!

In January 2019, Calgary Unitarians will present the annual Panabaker Award to someone in the congregation to honour that person for extraordinary service to the Church community. In order to do this, we need your nominations. You will find the guidelines for nominations on our website under *Newsletters and More – Congregational Awards*. Or here: <http://tinyurl.com/y964nzjc>

If you are wondering if a person you are considering has already received the award check the lists (Panabaker Award and Extraordinary Service Award) at the end of the *Congregational Award* page. The 2017 recipients were Jane Ebbern and Brandis Purcell.

Nominations may be emailed to president@calgaryunitarians.ca or placed in the President's mailbox in the Church Office. Nominations must be received on or before January 7, 2019 to be considered. The award will be presented at a Souper Sunday Lunch in January or February, depending on the availability of recipient.

We Need Your Help: Volunteer Sign Up Made Easy!

Have you ever wondered how things run so smoothly on Sunday mornings? The coffee is always on, the warm welcome you receive upon arrival, things are all set up and ready to go, and the ushers handing you the order of service and show you to a seat. It's all managed and run by volunteers, people just like you! If you haven't had the opportunity to volunteer, would like to do so, or wish to do more, please visit our volunteer sign up page at SignUp.com or you can talk to one of us on Sunday.



Here's how it works in 3 easy steps:

- 1) Click on one of the links below to see our SignUp.
- 2) Review the options listed and choose the spot(s) you like.
- 3) Sign up! It's Easy - you will NOT need to register an account or keep a password on SignUp.com.

Coffee Prep or Cleanup - <http://signup.com/go/MuUAPaH>

Ushers - <http://signup.com/go/iJvGdSM>

Welcomers - <http://signup.com/go/WSWPzsf>

Service Setup - <http://signup.com/go/eHRFtLz>

We'll be happy and excited to see your name beside a job for any of the Sundays this year!

~ Eric Leavitt, Barbara Lane, Donna Ontonio and Brandis Purcell



How to Reach Our Staff

Minister

Rev Debra Faulk
debra@calgaryunitarians.ca
403 702-6486

Director of Religious Exploration / Youth Program Coordinator

Sheila MacMaster 403-404-1361
dre@calgaryunitarians.ca

Music Director

Jane Perry
music@calgaryunitarians.ca

Administrator

Martha Mantikoski
office@calgaryunitarians.ca
403-276-2436
Monday -Wednesday & Friday
9am to Noon
Office closed Thursdays



Grow in Wisdom
Deepen Relationships
Act for Justice

Calgary Unitarians
1703 1st Street NW
T2M 4P4

www.unitarianscalgary.org

Phone: 403-276-2436

Publishing the Quest

The Quest is published 11 times per year by Calgary Unitarians. Electronic copies are available at www.calgaryunitarians.ca. Submissions of articles, photographs, and event announcements are encouraged. Questions about the Quest, please email: quest@calgaryunitarians.ca. ***The Quest Deadline is the 15th of every month except for July.***

ENEWS

The ENEWS is published via email once a week on Wednesday. Material for the ENEWS must be submitted by Tuesday midnight. If you would like to receive the ENEWS, please email enews@calgaryunitarians.ca

Booking Rooms

As our facility gets busier it is important that if rooms are needed they are booked in advance. Space can be reserved either by filling out the online booking form found here: <http://tinyurl.com/ybq27pq6>, by contacting the Administrator at 403-276-2436 or office@calgaryunitarians.ca

Lay Chaplains: Mary-Anna Louise Kovar and Beverly Webber

Our Lay Chaplains are trained to perform rites of passage, such as weddings, funerals/memorial services, child dedications, etc. They are available to provide such services for a fee to the wider community. (Services for Calgary Unitarians members are provided by the minister.) Our lay chaplains can be contacted by calling 403-276-2436 or via email: laychaplains@calgaryunitarians.ca.

The Caring Team

The Caring Team provides support to the members, friends, and families of the congregation. If life has you stressed because of illness, hospitalization, moving, we can help. If you have something to be celebrated, such as a graduation, marriage or new child, we are there with you. We are all part of the Caring Team! Need support, have a concern, or want to be of service? Contact caring@calgaryunitarians.ca