

October 2024

# NORTH UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

WE WELCOME WE INSPIRE



WE CONNECT WE ACT

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## Please Help Provide Hospitality!

We need your help to provide hospitality to our visitors on Sunday morning. It has never been easier to host Coffee hour--everything you need except snacks can be found in our beautiful new kitchen. Very simple instructions for how to make coffee and set up are posted on the kitchen wall. Please sign up to host coffee or greet by [clicking here!](#) Thank you!

## NEW FALL 2024 ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS

**Play games with persons of all ages the second Sunday of the month.** There will be both board games and role playing games. We will have a mix of fast-paced family games, strategy games, and fun collaborative games. After worship of the Second Sunday of the month, grab some food and/or a beverage and then head to Room 1 if you'd like to participate in a role playing game, and Room 3 if you'd like to try play a board game. No experience or sign up necessary!

**What Moves Us: Unitarian Universalist Theology --First Sundays at 11:45 AM** led by Rev. Susan the first Sunday of the month each month starting in October 2024. Both adults and teens are welcome. Join No need to sign up, just show up to Room 1 at 11:45 AM. You are welcome to attend just a few or all of these sessions. Through shared direct experiences and reflection exercises, readings and lessons, and ethical deliberations, What Moves Us creates an adult faith journey for those people who want to be able to better articulate their beliefs and understand how they connect with Unitarian Universalism.

### Join a Covenant Group

Covenant Groups invite people to deepen their connection to self, others, and spirit, through regular monthly meetings, reflection and spiritual practice. Covenant Groups consist of 6-8 people, one of whom acts as facilitator, who meet once a month for one and a half hours. Like covenant group meetings provide opportunity for personal check-ins, with the additional of a mutual exploration of a monthly theme. We're forming new covenant groups this Fall. Please sign up to indicate your interest, and Rev. Susan will be in touch about your preferences for meeting times and places. To sign up please send an email to [minister@nuuc.org](mailto:minister@nuuc.org).

### Vote Forward Letter Brunch--October. 6, noon-2:00PM

On Oct 6 (noon to 2:00), we will send personal, heartfelt handwritten letters encouraging fellow Americans to vote. These letters are nonpartisan. Past elections have proved that these letters are effective in helping mobilize potential voters in communities that have historically been marginalized in the political process. We will have brunch and write letters. And we will have packets to take home and write if you want to write additional letters or can't stay that day. Questions: Contact Rev Joan VanBecelaere [uujoanvanb@gmail.com](mailto:uujoanvanb@gmail.com)

**Many of us are drawn to the poetry of**

**Mary Oliver.** We'll explore some of her lesser known poems and wonder how their meaning informs our own lives. Each session will begin with a Mary Oliver poem and space will be provided to absorb, contemplate and journal. This is not a literature class or discussion, but utilizing a Circle of Trust approach, we will take inspiration from each other to deepen our own understanding of each poem. This series will be offered virtually on Zoom Sunday evenings at 7:00pm, September 22, September 29, October 6, and October 13. Each session is stand alone so please come to those you can. However, relating to the set of four poems will offer a richer experience. The sessions are free but registration is required to receive the Zoom links:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MaryOliver>

Facilitated by Karen McGuire, Interspiritual Companion

## Deepen Your Connection With Yourself Through Mary Oliver's Poetry



### Tell Us about Your Gifts and Passions!

The Leadership Development Committee has created a survey to find out what gives you joy. What gifts or talents do you have that could be shared? What opportunities could NUUC create within the congregation that would align with your passions? There are many ways to get involved in the congregation and the LDC would like to help make connections. Please fill out the survey by [clicking here](#).

## Religious Exploration at NUUC

**Second Sunday Games** Join us October 13 for all ages board games and role playing games. We will have a mix of fast-paced family games, strategy games, and fun collaborative games.

**Fall RE is in full swing, and we have three classes! More kids and teens mean more ways to get involved. Here are two options:**

**Share your Skills with NUUC Teens!** Each week in RE, our youth are learning a different practical (or fun) skill. I am looking for people who can teach basic financial skills (like how to budget), basic tool use (like how to hang a picture). Of course - your ideas are welcome, too! Email [morgan@nuuc.org](mailto:morgan@nuuc.org) to get started.

**Substitute and Assistant Teachers!** Assistants and subs get all the fun of RE without the work of organizing and leading the entire class. You can reach out to Morgan at [morgan@nuuc.org](mailto:morgan@nuuc.org) for more information.

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## Other Ways to Connect

**Mindful Writing** meets monthly, with members sharing a variety of written pieces and thoughts. All are welcome! Please contact Marty Keith if you're interested in joining the group so she can send you time and the Zoom link. [martykeith@zoho.com](mailto:martykeith@zoho.com)

**Brown Bag Books Discussion Group** meets monthly at noon on the Third Tuesday of each month, in Room 3 at church. Upcoming book selections are:

October **James** by Percival Everett

November **The Women of Troy** by Pat Barker

December **There's Always This Year: On Basketball and Ascension** by Hanif Abdurraquib

Life has a way of rushing by. Sometimes we feel the need to pause or to reflect more deeply. Join me for a virtual half hour of mindful contemplation that is inclusive, non-judgmental and expectation free. I'll bring a mix of poetry, music, breathwork, silence, or meditation to create a space for you to relax. Participants are muted. Feel free to turn your video off. Please engage in whatever way feels most meaningful to you. *A Space for Reflection* is freely offered the third Wednesday of the month at 7:00pm on Zoom. Registration is required ([link](#))

here).

As for me, Karen McGuire, the facilitator, I'm a lifelong Unitarian Universalist, a retired educator, and a trained Interspiritual Companion who finds it necessary to stop every once in a while, and pay attention.



A Space for Reflection



## Puzzles and Pieces and Election Conspiracies

by The Honorable [Thomas A. McKean](#)

It was getting close to 8:00am that morning I walked into the room. It was 25 years ago - 1999 - but I remember the day well. I had no clue when I walked in the significance of what we were about to do. I really thought

it wasn't going to make a difference, that it wouldn't catch on. Boy, was I was wrong.

I was in Bethesda, MD. There were 15 of us gathered from across the country - the board of directors of the *Autism Society of America*, a national, and at times international advocacy organization. We had, back then, well over half a million dues paying members around the world. The board member post was, back then, an elected office. I was in the middle of a second term. I was the only one diagnosed other than Temple Grandin who had been elected up to that point. I would also be the only one diagnosed who was a part of this project.

Across the pond back in '63, a father named Gasson sketched a picture that would represent autism for the next several years. It was a single puzzle piece with a crying child inside.

One could argue that it hasn't aged well (I'll get to that), but one must also consider what autism was at the time. A puzzle. An unknown. Non-verbal, intellectually challenged kids (who grew to be non-verbal, intellectually challenged adults) requiring 24/7 supervision due to ongoing behaviors that could injure themselves or others. As you can see, Gasson's symbol made autism look hopeless. But in 1963, hopeless is just what it was. If you were diagnosed (unlikely to happen as it was quite rare in those days), you were headed for the institution for the rest of your life.

As we were fast approaching the 21st century, the board felt the crying child was outdated. During the 90's, our knowledge and understanding of autism had increased by leaps and bounds. We didn't know everything (we still don't), but we knew enough to know it wasn't hopeless anymore and that it was definitely time to retire the crying child.

In updating the symbol, the board felt it was important to both honor the past and to look to the future. I agreed with this. The result was the puzzle piece you are all more familiar with.

The interlocking pieces represent the complexities of autism itself, the different colors of the pieces represent the variations we have found among the individuals who've been diagnosed, and the brightness of the colors represents hope. (I love that last part, and I loved having a vote on it.) That's what this symbol represents - officially. Note it is also instantly recognizable. We wanted that as well.

We replaced the old with the new and it caught on. As more were diagnosed, the symbol was seen more often and in more places. All was well until few years ago, a small but vocal group of younger, mostly proud self-diagnosed only autistics decided it was a hate symbol. They somehow had the idea that the puzzle piece was made as an insult to them personally, even though many of them hadn't been born when we made it. They claimed it was saying they themselves were a puzzle, or that they as individuals were somehow missing pieces. But there is no truth to this as these things were not discussed or even brought up when we were putting this together.

But that didn't matter. They yelled loud enough to be heard. It was all over social media that the puzzle piece was another swastika (yes, just that evil), and I was being asked way too many times by way too many strangers why I created a hate symbol, why I hated my own kind. I was even accused more than once of having "internalized ableism." (Ouch!) I had to write article after article for magazines, newsletters, blogs, web sites, and social media. I did presentations and

interviews on puzzle piece history and creation. I still do these things on occasion. I can't change the minds of those making the claims, but I have changed the minds of those who were listening to them.

Now here's why I'm telling you this...

As of this writing, it is October, 2024. And just as there is needless conspiracy with the puzzle piece, so is there needless conspiracy in our elections. The 2020 election was stolen. People are eating pets just down the road a piece. And who, if anyone, is telling the truth about Kamala's ethnicity? This and so much more is enough to make your head swim. So what's a Unitarian Universalist to do?

Vote.

That's all you need to do. Vote. I saw that I can't change the minds of the puzzle piece haters no matter how much evidence or proof I give them. They need to believe they are right. Likewise, it is unlikely that anyone will change the minds of whoever believes what's being said during this campaign. But it isn't your responsibility to change their minds. Your responsibility, your only responsibility, is to vote.

Sure, you can put signs in your yard, you can work the phone lines, you can write letters, you can knock on doors. You have the option to do any or even all of these things. But the one thing you absolutely must do is vote.

The puzzle piece is appropriate for the time it was made and that's a hill I am willing to die on. I feel no guilt or conviction or responsibility for the fact that it has been misinterpreted, just as you bear no responsibility for any of the absurdity going on around this election.

The only thing you are responsible for is your vote.

Whether you mail in a ballot or you wait in line come November 5th, please vote. That's how this Unitarian Universalist will deal with all of the campaign craziness. I will vote. There will be some voters who will vote based on fear, but I will follow my Unitarian Universalist faith. I will vote based on hope.

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