

Unconditional Love
Grosse Pointe
Unitarian Church
Radical Inclusivity



*Welcome! You have found an oasis of liberal religious and spiritual exploration serving the Grosse Pointes and the surrounding east side communities.
Reverend Dr. Alexander Riegel, Minister*

February 2019

Upcoming Services

February 3, 2019 **10:30 AM**

What Would Martin Say? Or Beverly? Or Dunbar?

Worship Leader: Minister Emeritus Rev. John Corrado
Worship Associate: Chuck Palmer

The admonition, "Love your neighbor," is not complicated -- it's just difficult to do. How can some lessons learned during Martin Luther King's time help us?

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February 10, 2019 **10:30 AM**

Universal Love-A Perfect Day

Worship Leaders: Julie Artis, Dr. Bill Brusilow, and GPUC Senior High Students

Worship Associate: Tonya Wells

There is no official holiday to celebrate universal love and do we need one? Come to explore this topic and enjoy a play written by Richard S. Kimball, *A Perfect Day*. There will be a special guest soloist, Dr. Sloane Artis, performing her favorite love songs.

Upcoming Events

- [Sun Feb 10 Facilities Session](#)
- [Sun Mar 3 Facilities Session](#)

February 17, 2019 **10:30 AM**

Detroit, the Classics, and the Ecology of Hope

Worship Leader: Prof. Jerry Herron **Worship Associate:** Suzanne Ross

I want to propose that hope has an ecology, very like the ecology of earth, water, or air. Just as we can harm the natural world by things we do, we can likewise imperil the viability of hope. But repair is both possible and necessary, which is where the classics come in. They are essential to an ecologically viable hope, in ways I want to explore, with Detroit being both our greatest American classic and also the most hopeful place on Planet Earth.

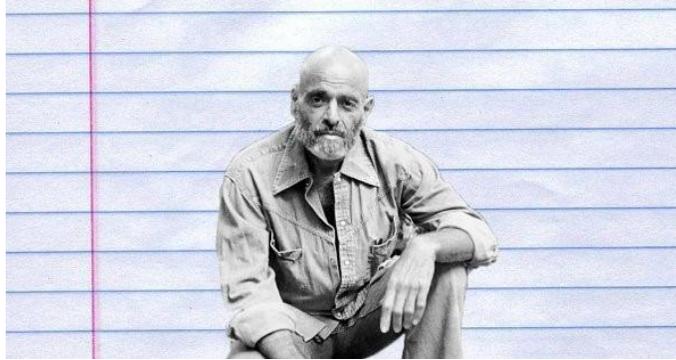
Forward To A Friend

February 24, 2019 **10:30 AM**

"Spare the rod, spoil the child": On the Wisdom of Proverbs"

Worship Leader: Rev. Dr. Alexander Riegel
Worship Associate: Maurya Kay

Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings contained in the Jewish Bible. Indeed, great wisdom is hidden therein. Nevertheless, Proverbs is one of the least well known books of the Bible. We dedicate this Sunday morning to mining it for golden nuggets of lost wisdom.



A Zebra He Ain't

One of my (many) favorite Shel Silverstein poems is the one about the zebra. "I asked the Zebra," says Silverstein...

*Are you black with white stripes?
Or white with black stripes?*

And the zebra asked me:

*Are you good with bad habits?
Or are you bad with good habits?
Are you noisy with quiet times?
Or are you quiet with noisy times?
Are you happy with some sad days?
Or are you sad with some happy days?
Are you neat with some sloppy ways?
Or are you sloppy with some neat ways?*

*And on and on and on and on
And on and on he went.*

I'll never ask a zebra

About stripes

Again

The witticism of this poem relies on the simple aesthetic opposition of black and white, and the lack of preferential value of one over the other. "Why," we can easily imagine the zebra wondering, "does the question even arise whether 'I'm black with white stripes' or 'white with black stripes'?" Indeed, when it comes to zebras does it really matter? Can't a zebra simply be *both* black and white without having to assess whether she is one or the other? Surely it can. That is exactly the point zebra is trying to make!

With people, however, it is not such a simple matter, is it? I was reminded of this fact when I was giving my sermon on Frederick Douglass last Sunday. Specifically, in the course of that sermon I described Douglass as half white (that is, he had a white father and a black mother). In and of itself this is not a remarkable statement because this is the manner in which we typically refer to people who have racially mixed parents (one black, the other white). So few, if any people likely felt a psychological cringe when I described Douglass thusly (It is worth noting that our congregation is about 95% white.).

With the above in mind, let us conduct a thought experiment. Let us imagine that I described Douglass as half black. I imagine that would have triggered a psychological cringe in some people because that is not the normative way we speak about people of racially mixed parents. At the very least a number of people would likely have wondered, even if ever so slightly, why I would have describe Douglass as half black (Let us not forget the racial demographic of our congregation.). Yes, I'm making a bit of an assumption here about white people's reactions to my words but I think I am on a pretty safe ground here, especially if you follow what comes next...

Let us take our thought experiment a bit further. Let us imagine that Douglass had one black grandparent (and three white grandparents). This means that Douglass would have had one white parent and one parent that was half white and half black. Mathematically that means that Douglass would have been 1/4 black. Once again I am making an assumption but I think I am still on pretty safe ground when I say that most people would have expected me to have described Douglas (or any such person) as black (especially if that person happened to have dark skin). Not convinced? Well, let us take our thought experiment even further...

Let us imagine that Douglass had one white grandparent (and three black grandparents). This means that Douglass would have had one black parent and one parent that was half white and half black. Mathematically that means that Douglass would have been 1/4 white. How would people have expected me to have described Douglass under those conditions? Once again I am making an assumption but I think I am still on pretty safe ground when I say that most people would have expected me to have described Douglass (or any such person) as black (even if that person had much lighter skin than most black people).

This raises the obvious question, namely, that if being 1/4 black means that it would be normative for me to refer to that person as black, should it not also be the case that being 1/4 white would mean that it should be normative for me to refer to that person as white? I think we all know that this is not the norm

(another assumption I feel I am making on pretty safe ground). This tendency defies both mathematics and logic! But... it does not defy our cultural psychology...

Our cultural psychology dictates that if a person has any identifiable nonwhite heritage that person belongs to a minority group. This is an old and deeply held belief by our culture that remains with us to this day - more than we are wont to admit. Indeed, as far back as 1705 laws existed on the book to ensconce this bias in our collective psyche. Quoting *Time* magazine:

The so-called "blood-fraction" laws of 1705 ruled that anyone who was at least 1/8 black - which meant one black great grandparent - could not be labeled white. A 1911 Arkansas law went further, declaring that citizens would be considered black if they had "any Negro blood whatever." And if you think that all that is an artifact of a less enlightened time, think again. A 1970 Louisiana law defined as black anyone who had at least 1/32 African-American blood - and in 1985, a state court upheld the legislation. - Time.com
[\[http://healthland.time.com/2010/12/10/whos-white-whos-black-who-knows/\]](http://healthland.time.com/2010/12/10/whos-white-whos-black-who-knows/)

In sum, when it comes to the question of race we can conclude at least this much. It ain't about mathematics. It ain't about logic. It's about cultural psychology... and we all still have a lot of work to do! Stated otherwise, when it comes to Frederick Douglass I know this much... a zebra he ain't!

Now about that work we have to do... I would like to hear from those of you who would be interested in co-leading a book study group with me next year on African American history. I

imagine six monthly meetings: October, November, December, February, March, and April. *If you are interested, please email me so I can determine the interest level and begin coordinating this effort:*

alexgpuc@gmail.com (Since I am currently on Study Break please don't expect to hear back from me until I return - but don't wait to email me, lest your interest wane..)

Namaste,

Alex

Religious Education News



Religious Education News

February has this day, February 14th set aside for love. It is the perfect occasion for going within ourselves and thinking about Universal Love. The Religious Education Program will be presenting a play, *A Lovely Day* on Sunday, February 10 at 10:30 a.m. about Universal Love. Below are some thoughts about this topic to start you thinking about Universal Love. We hope you join us.

False Universal Love

There are many misconceptions about Universal Love. Some think love is agape if it embraces a large group—like all old people, all refugees, all whales, etc. But what about the rest of life? True love responds to *all* of life. So if the brain has decided to restrict loving to a particular category, that is not the real spirit of agape.

Some think agape love is social activism. But passionate humanity service doesn't always reflect mature agape love. Imagine the head of a large save-the-orphans project. He's dedicated to the orphans, but when his wife walks into his office he ignores her. A true agape lover wouldn't fail to love those close to him as well.

Some think love is agape if it is impersonal (as in: "I love everyone, but no one in particular"). But is it possible to love *everyone* if you won't love *anyone*? No, it's just a concept—and a cop out. Real love sees, feels, and cares for the beloved. And that takes courage. It requires that we open our hearts, transcend our egos, trust, serve, be vulnerable. The preference for impersonal love comes from fear and resistance to deeper loving and giving, seeing and being seen. A real agape lover would love *each* one with real feeling, care, and consideration.

Love without personal passion and feeling is a bird with clipped wings. Feeling gives love clout and makes it effective; universal love is no exception. Universal love is not mediocre or impersonal. *All* real love is passionate, invested, committed. Anyone who gives and lives real love is on fire with that love, and thoroughly implicated by it. Their agape love will be real, intense, nurturing—by no means boring or unemotional. *That's* agape!

UNIVERSAL LOVE (Agape)

A real
agape lover
would watch
people walk
by and
be in love
with every
one of them.

True Universal Love

Agape—universal love—is the natural response of the heart to the feelings and existence of all of life. In agape, you walk down the street and you are moved by people, by their sweetness, their suffering, their joy. You love the thoughtfulness of one, the humor of another. You love all the flowers, every single one. That's the *nature* of the Divine heart within us. We feel agape when we let our heart respond naturally.

Human beings were born to love many. Often, people want their mate to love them *only*, and forsake all others—especially friends of the opposite sex. But that's asking them to betray their heart-nature, which loves and responds to all. A deal with the devil!

Loving many doesn't mean you love your mate any less. A mother of four doesn't divide up her love, and give each child 25%. Of course not! She loves each one wholeheartedly, passionately, fully. Love doesn't get smaller when we spread it around—only bigger.

And loving many doesn't mean you'll be unfaithful, either. True love is *moral*, with high sensitivity to the good of one and all, and ample self-discipline. It's not—*decidedly not*—driven by whimsy or selfish desire.

When love is allowed to respond to life fully, freely, *without* preference or selective withholding, *that's* true agape.

Religious Education Lessons

The **nursery** will be open at 9:15 a.m. for all OWL classes. We have the same loving childcare workers to provide a safe and caring place for our young UU's. We also have a pot of coffee for parents to enjoy and take the time to chat and get to know each other.

Lower and Upper Elementary

students will continue their study of Unitarian Universalism. All students who are registered for Elementary OWL classes will begin at 9:15 a.m. There will be a snack provided each Sunday. We are asking for donations of juice and snacks for all classes.

Junior students

will continue their study of Unitarian Universalism. Sixth graders who are signed up for OWL classes will begin at 9:15 a.m. The juniors are also starting the Church Pal program on January 27.

Senior High students

will continue their study of Unitarian Universalism in preparation for their trip to Boston in June 2019.

"There is no remedy for love but to love more."

- Henry David Thoreau

Julie Artis, Director of Religious Education

Vision Facilities Committee Update

Thank you to all that attended the session on January 20 with our architect, John Hill. We presented several options of expanding our facilities and addressing the needs of the congregation. The drawings shared at the meeting have been posted in the sanctuary. Please take some time to look them over. There are some very exciting ideas in them.

We are holding 2 small group sessions on February 10 and March 3 to gather additional input. The sessions will be in the library after the service. Please sign up and bring us your idea.

In addition to these sessions you can provide input to any of these committee members:

Russ Chavey
Lori Panzenhagen
Alex Riegel
Alan Darr
Veronica Smith
Rudy Wedenoja
Chris Vadino

Chris Vadino and Rudy Wedenoja
Co-Chairs

Safety Committee

The First Aid Workshop on January 13, 2019 was a success. We received positive feedback from participants and hope to arrange another workshop this Spring.

As a result of the workshop, the Safety Committee will be looking into purchasing additional first aid items for our facilities as well as offering other life saving presentations.

First Aid Equipment @ GPUC:

- **AED Unit**
 - Located in the lobby near the basement stairway on the wall above the drinking fountain.

 - **Kitchen**
- First Aid Kit
- Tourniquet with Trauma Pack
 - Fire Blanket
-
- **RE Wing**
- First Aid Kit
- Trauma Pack
 - Fire Blanket
-
- **Annex Kitchen**
- First Aid Kit
- Fire Blanket

If any members have any questions, concerns or suggestions, please don't hesitate to contact one of the members of the Safety Committee.

Members of this committee include:

| | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Lynn Rehahn | Dr. Alex Riegel |
| Bill Rehahn | John Engstrom |
| Sonja Franchett | Karen Valliere |
| Carol Ghesquiere | Julie Artis |

I would like to extend a Big Thank You to Karen Valliere. She worked diligently with Sunny Squindo from Beaumont Hospital to make the First Aid Workshop possible. Karen and her husband Jim also generously donated lunch for participants.

-- Lynn Rehahn
Chairperson GPUC Safety Committee

Memorial Day Retreat



***Devotion and Personal Practice:
Where the Egoic Rubber Hits the Spiritual Road
@ the DeSales Lodge in Brooklyn, Michigan***

A couple of months ago I sent out an email with an encouragement to "save the date" for a Memorial Day weekend retreat, highlighting both Kimi's wonderful cooking and my almost as wonderful teaching. (If you did not get this email you are not on my personal distribution list. If you are not but would like to be, simply send me an email indicating so.) The retreat will take place at our usual stomping grounds (<http://www.desales.org/index.html>). It begins on Friday, May 24 (you may arrive any time after 3 PM) and runs through noon on Monday, May 27.

The focus of this retreat will be devotion and personal practice, meaning that we will spend our mornings and evenings in group devotion/spiritual practice. At the same time, there will be plenty of grist for your mental mill as I will be giving lectures and facilitating group work with material pertinent to our theme. We will also spend time doing group and dyad work with spiritual texts. Finally, for those of you who wish, we will set aside an hour a day for a focused study of mantra (beginners included).

The cost of the retreat is \$300. This includes three nights lodging (everyone gets their own rooms, save couples that wish to share) and nine meals.

***NOTE** - We are limiting attendance to 20 people. This has been our approximate attendance in the past but in this instance Kimi and I are both going to open up this opportunity to members of our churches, **so don't hesitate to register!**

To reserve your spot, please send a nonrefundable \$100 deposit to me at: 786 Harcourt Rd., Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan, 48230. (Also, please email me once you have done so so that I may expect your deposit.) There is no deadline for sending in your deposit but **spaces will be reserved on a first-come first-serve basis.**

If you have any questions, please feel free to email me.

Namaste!

Alex

Announcements

MidAmerica Region of the UUA REGIONAL ASSEMBLY 2019



"Intersectionalities"

The 2019 MidAmerica Regional Assembly is coming sooner than you think! This year, our RA will be held in **St. Louis, Missouri**, at the Marriott St Louis, **April 5-7, 2019**.

The theme is "Intersectionalities"—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 and skills we need in order to work more effectively with one another, as well as the general "nuts and bolts" of congregational life, such as leadership, stewardship, membership, and religious education. Our Keynote Presenter will be UUA President, Susan Frederick-Gray. Join us to explore, share, and worship with fellow Unitarian Universalists.

More information on pricing (early bird discount deadline is Feb., 28, 2019), deadlines and workshops can be found: <https://www.uua.org/midamerica/ra>

Music News

ADULT CHOIR - Thinking of joining? Well, think no more! Come and sing with us. We sing twice a month for service. Rehearsals are Wednesday evenings from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. in the Purple Room.

CHILD CARE is available at that time! Friendly, talented people will greet you. No auditions. Come as you are. It's an elite group with down-to-earth people. Now isn't that appealing?

YOUTH CHOIR - boys and girls K on up-join us! Rehearsals are after Religious Ed class, for 15 minutes. Come sing with us-it's fun. I keep getting such great feedback of how much everyone loves the Youth Choir!

WARSAW CONCERTO: 75 Years of Uprising is the title of my upcoming annual solo piano concert, **Saturday, May 11th at 4:00 p.m.** Mark your calendars. This will be an exciting commemoration of the

Warsaw Uprising, one of the most important events of WW II. Celebrating its 75th anniversary, you will hear music and stories that will touch your heart. Hope to see you there.

SEE OUR WEBSITE CONTENT: <http://www.gpuuc.org/choir-and-music.html>
<http://www.gpuuc.org/meet-the-staff.html>

Joseph Palazzolo, Music Director

Our next Food Sharing will be SUNDAY February 3.

As we all know, times are hard for many people right now. Crossroads East, located in Detroit Cooperative Church on Moross and Chester, offers social services, employment assistance, a clothing closet, food pantry, and more. Each month, GPUC collects **non-perishable foods** to help keep their pantry stocked.

We also collect

money to purchase milk, eggs, bread, fruits and vegetables. These items are bought and delivered several times a month, so the staff also has fresh items to offer clients. Please consider bringing a donation for Crossroads East to church on Feb 3.

Women's Book Discussion Group

The Women's Book Discussion group meets on the third Wednesday of the month from October to April at 5:30pm in the GPUC Library. Book lists are available on the table in the foyer or by email from the church office (gpuc@gpuc.us). Refreshments are provided; cost is divided among the attendees. We gather in May for a pot-luck dinner and to choose books for the fall. We welcome new participants!

Our next meeting is Wednesday, February 20 at 5:30pm in the church library.

Book: Lab Girl by Hope Jahren

Discussion Leaders: Julie Artis and Christy Winder

An illuminating debut memoir of a woman in science; a moving portrait of a longtime friendship; and a stunningly fresh look at plants that will forever change how you see the natural world.

Newsletter Deadline

Please submit your contribution to the next newsletter by **Friday, February 22 at noon.**

Submit items to **The new newsletter email address:** newslettergpuc@gmail.com

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