

*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**

**December 2019**

**Upcoming Services**

**December 1, 2019**  
**10:30 AM**

**Sermon:** *"You Say 'Tomato,' I Say 'Tomato,' Let's Talk about That!"*

**Worship Leader:** Dr. Riegel  
**Worship Associate:** Meghan Boomhower

One of the courses I took in Divinity School was entitled "Action Science." Action Science is an organizational communication theory, which also works very well for individuals. On the first day of class one of my professors stated that "Ninety percent of interpersonal conflict is due to miscommunication." I was skeptical at first. By the end of the semester I was sold. Since then, I have used the strategies of Action Science over and over and over again, both in my ministry and in my personal life. In this sermon, I will share with you a few Action Science strategies that you can keep in your own interpersonal tool bag.

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**December 8, 2019**  
**10:30 AM**

**Service:** *Annual All Music Sunday*

**Worship Leader:** Dr. Riegel  
**Worship Associate:** N/A

Come join us for a fun celebration of our community's talent. You'll hear students singing solo and playing the piano and the violin. Both the Adult and the Youth Choirs will sing. You'll experience a seasonal collage of culture from European and Jewish to African-American. Our music director Mr. Palazzolo will play a concert piano piece. Come early to get a seat and hear the gathering music!

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**December 15, 2019**  
**10:30 AM**

**Service:** *The Annual Holiday Pageant*

**Worship Leader:** Julie Artis  
**Worship Associate:** Dr. Riegel

Come join us as our youth perform their holiday pageant, *The Latke Who Couldn't Stop Screaming*, a Christmas story by Lemony Snicket. The story ends in someone's mouth, but it begins in a tiny village more or less covered in snow.

There will be a surprise visit from yours truly, **Santa Claus!** We will also have a guest cantor, Bryant Frank. And also, we will have wonderful holiday snacks for the whole congregation after the service. Please bring your family and friends to help celebrate our GPUC youth and the holiday season.

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**Upcoming Events**

- [Mon Dec 2 The Other Side Workshop](#)
- [Sun Dec 8 Food Sharing Opportunity](#)
- [Tue Dec 10 Alliance Christmas Concert](#)

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**December 22, 2019**  
**10:30 AM**

**Sermon:** *Which Way Does Your Compass Point?: The Heart as True North*

**Worship Leader:** Dr. Riegel  
**Worship Associate:** Chuck Palmer

We live in a very "left brain" world. We like that which is measurable, calculable, and verifiable. But we are also aware, ultimately, that meaning in life is not a left brain phenomenon. Meaning in life is found in the ambiguity of relationships, the intuitive aesthetics of natural beauty, and the sense of self that we experience in our solitary moments. As we approach the celebration of the birth of Jesus, I will speak to *agape*, that heart centered, right brain experience that serves as the spiritual "true north."

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**December 24, 2019**  
**6 PM**

**Service:** *Christmas Eve Service*

**Worship Leader:** Dr. Riegel  
**Worship Associate:** Chuck Palmer

Join us for our traditional Christmas in the Round. Dr. Riegel will deliver a Christmas homily, we will have a special guest musician, listen to the story of Jesus' birth, and sing traditional Christmas hymns.

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**December 29, 2019**  
**10:30 AM**

**Sermon:** *Was Jesus an Essene?*

**Worship Leader:** Ed Marck  
**Worship Associate:** Meghan Boomhower

In Jesus' time, there were three main Jewish religious sects. You probably already know two of them; the Pharisees and Sadducees. The third was the Essenes. On Sunday, we will explore the likelihood that Jesus' ties with the Essenes guided his social justice message and how that same message is relevant today.

## Alexander's Meander



### The Wonder and Awe of Rebirth

In the midst of global warming... in the midst of a polarized political climate... in the midst of increasing geopolitical turmoil... in the midst of my *late* midlife years (I say "*late* midlife years" because at the age of 50 I mentioned to a friend of mine that I was at the midpoint of my life, to which she rejoined, "You really expect to live to be 100 years old?!" Well I hope so, but point made!)... the little baby pictured above entered the world. Her name is Nova, Kimi and my first grandbaby. (Isn't that a Gerber baby face if you ever seen one?! By the way, the person who was the original Gerber baby passed away last week...)

I share this photo for two reasons. First, some of you may not know that Kimi and I recently became grandparents. Even if you do know this, it is likely that you haven't seen a photo yet. Second, I think that that face bespeaks wonder and awe! This latter reason is really what this Meander is about... we are entering the season of wonder, awe, and rebirth.

There is so much struggle these days that that struggle can captivate one's attention. If one isn't careful, this struggle can come to dominate one's psyche, leading to bouts of despair and depression. Add to this the usual holiday dynamics of busyness and family (or maybe loneliness), and we are at risk of totally missing the point of the holidays that are upon us: thanksgiving and renewal.

So, it's important to take time *not* attending to the struggles that face us - turn off those impeachment proceedings! And, it's important *not* to let the usual holiday dynamics of busyness and family overwhelm us - it's okay to say "No"! Instead, create opportunities for yourself to plug into the wonder and awe of the rebirth continually taking place about us; we whose eyes so often miss the miraculous.

Get up earlier than usual and sit quietly on the sofa and listen to the birds greet the dawn. Gather with friends at the local pub for casual conversation and a good oatmeal Stout! Grab your favorite junk food and binge on a double feature of your two favorite films. Grab the hand of one you love and walk the wooded trail in silence. Stare into a baby's eyes be reminded of wonder, of awe... of rebirth.

*Namaste,*

Alex

## Dr. Riegel's Sabbatical



### **A sabbatical? For how long?!**

As most everyone knows by now, I have a sabbatical coming up this year (January through April). I've heard some people express confusion and anxiety about a four-month absence on the part of the minister during the church year, so I thought I'd take advantage of this newsletter article to get us all on the same page.

### **First, Why do ministers take sabbaticals?**

The sabbatical tradition for ministry follows the sabbatical tradition of academia. In both academia and ministry there is the realization that in order to keep one's mental game sharp, as well as make contributions to one's field, one periodically needs time away from regular duties. It's important to realize that this time away from duties is not time off/vacation time! Rather, it is time for spiritual renewal AND work/production. Toward that end...

### **Second, What will our minister do while on sabbatical?**

As some of you know, I have more ideas than I could possibly accomplish in a lifetime! During the sabbatical I hope to make significant strides toward realizing some of those ideas. I have about 10 book ideas that have been floating through my head for a long time now. I hope to finish a complete draft of one of these books while on sabbatical. The book toward which I am leaning is an extension of the sermon I did last year, entitled, "Jesus, the Jewish Mystic." I will also be working on the creation of online content, including video material for my upcoming YouTube page and online classes for my website. I will also begin creating video sermon synopses of what I think are some of my better sermons, in digestible form (somewhere between five and 10 minutes, on average...). Finally, I am going to do a final edit of my doctoral thesis and turn it into an e-book, as well as create a website to support it. That's a lot! I may not realize all of these ideas but I should make great strides toward that end.

### **Third, Who will handle pastoral duties while the minister is away?**

Many people assume I'm going back to India because I often go on pilgrimage to India when circumstances allow. Because I consider this sabbatical time a rare opportunity actually to realize some of my ideas, I've chosen to stay stateside this time. I'm going to hunker down and keep my nose to the grindstone... which means I will be available for urgent pastoral needs (hospitalization and death). The church president (Russ Chavey), church Administrator (Candy Dunn), and Director of Religious Education (Julie Artis) will contact me if they deem it appropriate. This means that if you believe that you are in need of my pastoral attention while I am on sabbatical, contact them first and leave it up to them to reach out to me. I will otherwise be out of communication with folk...

### **Ministerial sabbatical time is an opportunity for the congregation to learn about itself.**

One of the things that I have been increasingly trying to convey to the congregation is that the congregation should not be ministerial dependent. While the minister plays an important role in the life of the congregation, most of the functioning of the congregation - especially in the context of our Congregational polity - should happen through its members, e.g., the Board and our numerous committees. Indeed, one of the reasons for the bylaw revisions we did the last annual meeting was to help strengthen our ministry at the committee level, in order that the congregation can grow into an increasing ownership of the ministry. In

sum, the congregation can keep on chugging on without the minister. Where it does this successfully is an indicator of the health of the congregation. Where struggles to do this is an indicator where attention is needed. In other words, one could consider sabbatical time a litmus test for Congregational health...

Finally, **Sabbatical time helps to ensure long-term ministry.**

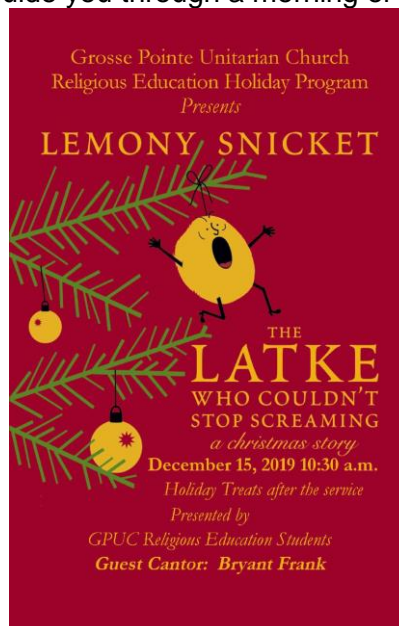
Did you know that the average length of ministerial service in our modern age is 5 to 7 years? Sabbatical time gives ministers the opportunity for rest and renewal, which in turn lengthens ministries. I remain grateful and humbled for the opportunity to serve this beloved community. I look forward to coming back from sabbatical recharged and optimistic about the next phase of what I hope will be a long-term ministry together!

*Namaste,*

*Alex*

## Religious Education News

On **December 15, 2019 at 10:30 a.m.** our students from the GPUC Religious Education program will provide a holiday program called *The Latke Who Couldn't Stop Screaming* by Lemony Snicket. The students have been studying Abrahamic Faiths and the first faith has been Judaism. The pageant will feature our guest Cantor, Bryant Frank. Whatever our beliefs, the holidays provide us with our own rituals to celebrate. Our students are enjoying preparing for their pageant with happiness and joy. Come on Sunday, December 15th and let our students guide you through a morning of happiness during this special season.



We are asking for donations of cookies, cheese, crackers and fruit for our after the program snacks for the whole congregation. Also, senior high students will have a holiday table of gifts that you may want to purchase for a loved one.

### Dates to Remember

- December 1 at 9:15 a.m. RE Committee meeting, nursery will be open at 9:15 a.m.
- December 8 right after church, practice in the church for the pageant
- December 15 at 9:15 a.m. for all students to report to the sanctuary to practice before the church service. Holiday program presented at 10:30 a.m.
- December 22 and December 29 may attend the church service. December 22 there will be holiday crafts for the students to enjoy during class time.
- The nursery will be open every Sunday to care for our young students.

### Holiday Wishes to all of You

#### The Things You Wish Yourself

by Ralph McTell

*As the snow falls gently down, gently down, gently down filling up the city streets, gently down, gently down, gently down, may the season bring you joy and find you in good health but most of all we wish you all the things you wish yourself.*

*As the season draws to an end, to an end, to an end, may you share it with a friend, with a friend, with a friend.*

*May the season bring you joy and find you in good health, but most of all we wish you all the things you wish yourself.*

*The things you wish yourself, may be a better year, a wish for peace throughout the world more laughter and less tears.*

*The things you wish yourself and those you hold most dear. So raise a glass to times gone past and welcome the New Year.*

*As the snow falls gently down, gently down, gently down, filling up the city streets, gently down, gently down, gently down, may the season bring you joy and find you in good health, but most of all we wish you all the things you wish yourself.*

Happy Holidays!  
Julie Artis, Director of Religious Education

## Fellowship News

Thanks to all who made the food, brought the food and enjoyed the food at our annual Thanksgiving Potluck. And a special thanks to all who helped set up before the event, guided us all through the event, and cleaned up after the event: Cindi Arfken; Randi, Amelia and Ron Borys; Mollie Fletcher; Carole Hindle; Kathy Konwiak; Paul Lipsitz; Kathy Marcozzi; Salad Chef - Jeff Marotzke; Mary Morshead; Sarah Neely; Teresa and Wayne Ramsey; Amy Thelen. We are always grateful for our wonderful staff helpers Candy Dunn and Willie and Jay Barber.

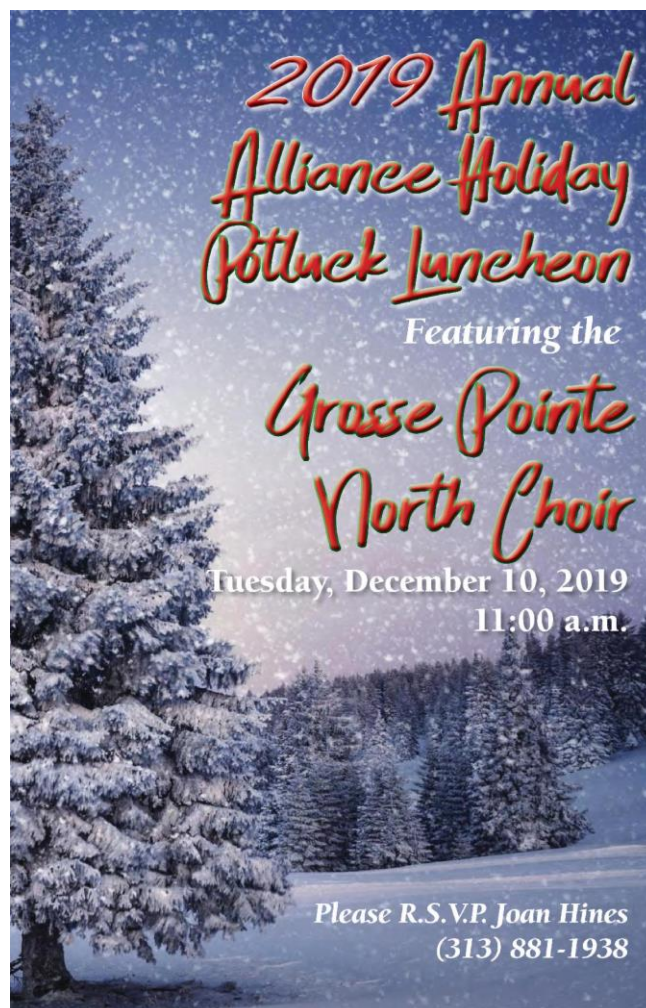
## Announcements

### **The Other Side: A Three Course Session on Near Death Experience - Session Three**

The third and final session will take place on **Monday, December 2nd** in the Church Sanctuary.

Are you interested in the phenomenon of near death experience? Do you wonder whether after-life communication is possible? Have you intuited that reincarnation might be true after all? If these topics interest you (skeptics welcome!), join Dr. Riegel and Linda Lawrence for their class: *The Other Side*.

**DECEMBER 8 is our next Food Sharing Sunday.** Please consider bringing a can or box of non-perishable food to church with you on this Sunday. We also gladly receive cash or check donations to purchase milk, eggs, bread, and produce. GPUC takes your donations to Crossroads East on Moross in Detroit. Many thanks for your continued support of this local resource!



It's that time. Begin the Holiday Season with lunch and a concert. **The Alliance annual Christmas concert by the North High School choir followed by a potluck luncheon** will be held **Tuesday, December 10 at 11 AM** in the church sanctuary. Members, friends and guests are welcome. Please RSVP to Joan Hines.

**The GPUC Resale Shop** is pleased to welcome Malo Villareal, who will Co-Chair our shop with Margo

Bishop. We are lucky to have Malo join us. She brings her calming personality, organizational skills and retail expertise to our group.

With a look to the future, Amy Thelen will now be the Director of Internet and Marketing. We are also excited to welcome Pam Roelans to our Ebay Department. Pam has already proven her organizational skills and along with Debbie Connelly will keep Amy in check!

The main hallway of the shop will be painted over the Holiday break for our second phase of improvements. In addition, a new picture display system will be utilized.

Stop in and meet Malo and Pam and check out our wonderful Christmas items this year! Happy Holidays from the GPUC Resale Shop.



### **It's a Wonderful Start to Holiday Giving!**

The Holiday Giving Program launched at the Thanksgiving service began with a donation of 13 whole Holiday Baskets; Mollie Fletcher led the way with a gift of two baskets! To date, we are 5 whole baskets and 3 half baskets from column #1 shy of meeting our goal to provide 25 of the neediest families at Detroit Merit School with a great holiday meal and treats!

In addition to the baskets, members and friends donated \$694 toward the purchase of spiral cut, double glazed hams, bags of fresh fruit and festive napkins. If you write a check, please put "Holiday Giving" or "Baskets" in the memo line. For cash, please use an envelope and write your name on the front.

We welcome participation from all ages and sizes. The volunteer opportunities list on the light blue Holiday Giving sheet offers every member and friend a chance to participate in the program we have sponsored for the last 25+ years. The mitten tree is set up and beginning to be decorated with sturdy gloves, hats, and scarves as well as receiving new or slightly used children's books around the base. Other vital volunteer opportunities listed on the sheet contribute to making a wonderful holiday for the 25 neediest families at the Detroit Merit Academy.

Our gifts are greatly appreciated by the recipients as well as by the principal, teachers and staff. Holiday Giving sign-up sheets are available in the church foyer, to download from the church website or from the church office. Please return the completed forms to the basket in the foyer, the GPUC office or by email to [gpuc@gpuc.us](mailto:gpuc@gpuc.us). Please contact Susie Boynton or Candy Dunn in the office for further information.

**All Holiday Giving donations are due at the church no later than Sunday, December 15th.**

**Donate Flowers for the Sanctuary** Please consider donating fresh flowers for the Sanctuary in recognition, in honor of someone dear or to celebrate or commemorate a special occasion. Flowers add significantly to the ambience on Sunday mornings. Please use the yellow insert in the Sunday order of service or contact the church office to sign-up for a Sunday or two.

Let us know if you will bring your own arrangement or provide a check (minimum cost \$25) for Susan Hartz (our talented flower chairperson) to purchase and arrange the flowers. After the worship service you make take your flowers home to enjoy the rest of the week. If you have questions, please feel free to email or call the church office at [gpuc@gpuc.us](mailto:gpuc@gpuc.us) or (313) 881-0420. Thank you for sharing your remembrances of special occasions and important people in your life.

### **GPUC Will Feed the Homeless on MLK Day**

During the cold months of the year there are never enough shelter beds to fill the need in metro Detroit. That's why Cass Community Social Services coordinates a Rotating Homeless Shelter from November to April every year. Local organizations--mostly churches--house homeless adults for seven consecutive nights. Other churches step up to bring and serve a hearty dinner. Several Grosse Pointe churches have been participating in this program for years.

This winter, Grosse Pointe United Methodist Church will be sheltering up to 50 people every night from January 19-25. Friends there have invited GPUC to provide dinner one night during the week. In answer to that call, the Social Justice Committee has agreed to sponsor dinner on January 20, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Social Justice has pledged \$200 toward the food. Member Lauri Hoese has generously volunteered to

make and donate the desserts. We estimate that the total cost of the dinner will be at least \$500. It will take many hands--and more funds--to make this happen. We will need shoppers, cooks, delivery people and servers. Can you or your committee help?

If you would like to donate time or money for this project please contact Chris Vadino.



Calling all volunteers for the upcoming **GPUC Auction on April 18, 2020**. Our theme is "The Roaring 20s" and we are looking forward to having a roaring good time! We need a variety of folks who are interested in serving food, decorating, phone calling, organizing, entertaining, advertising, collecting stuff, setting up, cleaning up and raising money for our church. All helpers welcome!

Please email Robin Ramsay or Christy Winder if you have questions or wish to volunteer.

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### **New 2019 - 2020 GPUC Phone Directories**

Members that have not picked up their new phone directories have been notified by email. The directories are available in the foyer on Sundays or in the church office during the week or you may call the church office to make alternate arrangements. An electronic copy of the directory can be found on the church website under the password protected members only page; please call the office for electronic directory access and password. (313) 881-0420

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### **Newsletter Deadline**

Please submit your contribution to the next newsletter by **Friday, December 20th at noon**.

Submit items to the newsletter email address: [newslettergpuc@gmail.com](mailto:newslettergpuc@gmail.com)

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