


# Grosse Pointe Unitarian Church

A Welcoming Congregation 



*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 2015

## Upcoming Services

**Dec 6, 2015** **10:30 AM**  
**Jesus, Myhra, Horus, Krishna, Buddha: Will the True Messiah Please Stand Up?**

**Dr. Alexander Riegel** **Tonya Wells, Worship Associate**

The ancient world was awash in savior figures whose story lines are remarkably similar. We will investigate these story lines, consider their similarities, and see whether we can draw any reliable historical information about the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

**Dec 13, 2015** **10:30 AM**  
**Our Christmas Pageant**  
**Worship Leader Julie Artis**

Come join us as the youth of the church perform their annual pageant. This time honored tradition is an opportunity to witness the talent of our youth and demonstrate through our attendance that we believe they have much of value to bring to our community. (Word has it that we will also have an especially talented curmudgeon join the acting troupe this year!)

**Dec 24, 2015** **6:00 PM**  
**Christmas Eve Service**  
**Dr. Alexander Riegel**

We will celebrate Christmas in the Round, a time honored tradition at GPUC. We will sing carols, share readings, and Dr. Riegel will share with us his annual reading from "The Velveteen Rabbit."

**Dec 27, 2015** **10:30 AM**  
**Sunday Service**  
**Cynthia Luce** **Janet Weber, Worship Associate**

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## Comments from Dr. Alexander Riegel

### The Holiday Season is Upon Us!

It is hard to believe how fast time is moving. The Thanksgiving holiday has already passed and Christmas is only a few weeks away. Before we know it it will be the year 2016! Time seems to be racing and us along with it. Perhaps one way to slow time down a bit is to stop and pause - to take in the seasons that are upon us - to consider the themes of thanksgiving and rebirth.

I know I say it a lot but it is true. I am deeply grateful to be able to serve Grosse Pointe Unitarian Church. And, we are experiencing - together - a rebirth of sorts. It is an exciting time to be at GPUC and I believe we are on the verge of a vital and long term ministry together.

When you stop and pause and consider the themes of Thanksgiving and rebirth in your life, what gets on your radar? Take a moment and reflect upon this...

On another note, I want to remind people that there is a bit of a cultural shift taking pace at GPUC in regard to our "church year." We are shifting away from the traditional model of "taking the summer off" and moving to a model where church is considered to be "year round." That is why I was on duty in the month of August. It is also why I will be away for one month beginning shortly after the New Year, that is, I will be taking my Study Break.

Study Break is the time a minister gets for rest, rejuvenation, and spiritual study and practice. This year I will be returning to that lovely little ashram I visit in southern India. There I will do spiritual study and practice and outline a book that I will be drafting this Spring and Summer on the mystic poets. When I return I will have lots of stories to share...

While I am away the congregation will have the opportunity to enjoy different ministerial presences. My wife (and minister of the Northwest UU Church) will be in the pulpit, as will John Corrado (for the first time since his retirement from GPUC). As soon as I return, Julie Artis and I will conduct a service about General Assembly, the national gathering UUs from across the country, taking place in Columbus, Ohio this coming June (We hope you will consider going, given how close it is...).

Namaste,

Alex

### Message from the GPUC Board of Trustees

This year marks the 50th anniversary of our beautiful double-circle building. The Board has been diligently working on identifying potential improvement projects for our building and grounds. We held a retreat last week where we identified those projects that we would like to begin this church year:

- 1) We believe we have the funds to work on the Memorial Garden and Parking lot Walkway. A landscape designer is busy drawing up potential plans for these areas as well as the rest of the grounds. We would implement these enhancements in stages.
- 2) The Board believes we have funds to purchase updated audio-visual equipment for the Sanctuary. This equipment will enhance Sunday services and other events held in the Sanctuary.
- 3) We have received quotes on adding air-conditioning to the sanctuary and other areas of the building, as well as quotes for updating our entire HVAC system. As this is a large expenditure, the Board will come to the congregation to discuss the plan and request the congregation's approval. Stay tuned for meetings in the spring.

At the retreat, the need to develop a GPUC Vision was discussed. Understanding what we want our church to become over the next 5 to 10 years will require the input of the entire congregation. This Vision and the direction we want the church to take affects all aspects of our operation from Sunday services to physical plant improvements. Stay tuned for upcoming meetings and workshops where we will develop this Vision together! This is an exciting time in the life of GPUC.

The Board welcomes our newest Trustee, George Robert (Rob) Lyles. He is already a wonderful addition to the Board!

Robin Ramsay  
President, GPUC Board of Trustees

### Religious Education News

On December 13, 2015 at 10:30 a.m. our students from the GPUC Religious Education program will provide a holiday program called How the Grinch Stole Christmas by Dr. Seuss, a Unitarian. The students will share their talents by acting, being ushers, singers, readers and more.

How the Grinch Stole Christmas is about the Whos down in Whoville. They are enjoying preparing for Christmas with much happiness and joy. But, the Grinch has other ideas and despises Christmas. Come to our pageant and find out what happens to the Grinch!!



We are asking for donations of cookies, cheese, crackers and fruit for our after the program snacks for the whole congregation. Please join us for a morning of holiday joy, sharing and hope during this holiday season.

### RE Lessons

The **nursery** will be open at 9:30 a.m. every Sunday morning. We have the same loving childcare workers to provide a safe and caring place for our young UU's.

**Lower and Upper Elementary and Juniors** students on November 29 and December 6 the students will be practicing for the holiday pageant. December 6th right after church we will hold a rehearsal for one hour to practice for our pageant. December 13th all students are asked to be at the church by 9:30 a.m. for the pageant

**Senior** high students on November 29, December 6th and December 20th the senior high students will meet at the Ottenhoff home at 7:-8:30 p.m. December 13th students are asked to meet at the church at 9:30 a.m. for the pageant.

As we enter into this holiday season I want to share a message to all the students, parents and church members. The most important words you can say at this time of the year is "thank you".

So, thank you for helping to provide and maintain our church home. Thank you for stepping up when asked. Thank you for giving and sharing of yourselves. Thank you for believing in providing service to the less fortunate. Thank you for your love and kindness to all. May your holidays be filled with love, joy and a peaceful time with family and friends.

"To be grateful for the good things that happen in our lives is easy, but to be grateful for all of our lives-the good as well as the bad, the moments of joy as well as the moments of sorrow, the successes as well as the failures, the rewards as well as the rejections-that requires hard spiritual work. -Henri Nouwen

Happy Holiday!  
Julie Artis, Director of Religious Education

## Adult Religious Education

### Movie Discussion Evening at GPUC

#### *Waking Life*

Friday, December 4th at 6 pm in the Annex

Pizza, salad, and wine will be served before viewing the film. Following the film we will take a short break for dessert and coffee then regather for a discussion of the film, led by Dr. Riegel.

Cost: \$10 per person: Please sign up in foyer before Wednesday, December 2nd.

#### SYNOPSIS:

Waking Life is an animated story about a nameless young man, played by Wiley Wiggins, who finds himself trapped in a continuous series of dreams. He walks or levitates from one scene to another, listening to a range of theories by philosophers, intellectuals, and crackpots. The text commentary to the film states that Waking Life features a complex interweaving of conversations with professors, artists, writers, and performers. There is no single theory behind the film. Rather the film is an exploration from many points of view of past and current trends in philosophy.

The principal plot to the story is that Wiley returns to Austin, Texas after a trip, is dropped off at a random location in town and subsequently hit by a car. During the first half of the film he listens to various people's theories about human existence, saying very little himself. In the second half of the film Wiley realizes that he is stuck in a series of lucid dreams and he attempts to "wake up." As his efforts fail he considers that he may in fact be dead and experiencing a dream-like condition in the afterlife.

Director Richard Linklater states in the DVD filmmaker's commentary that all of the ideas expressed in the movie should be accessible to viewers, even though the dialog is conceptually dense. Several of the exchanges were from ideas developed for his previous movies, which were left out of those projects for various reasons. Other exchanges were generated from the actual views of the professionals or intellectuals who appear. About half of this movie's content, he stated, is intentionally philosophical.

You may watch the film before the meeting but we will view it together preceding the discussion. Link to helpful questions: <http://www.philfilms.utm.edu/1/waking.htm>

The film is available on DVD from Netflix and is available for streaming on You Tube.

**First Sundays at noon - Mystic Poet Workshops:** In these workshops we will utilize a method of dream interpretation in order to use mystic poetry as a tool for personal and spiritual growth. In small group settings we will examine one poem per month, collectively sharing our personal insights into the possible meanings of these poems. Poets include the likes of Rumi, Hafez, Mary Oliver, Goethe, Kabir, Lalla, etc.

**Third Sundays at noon - Meditation:** This is an introduction to meditation course with mini lectures, Q & A, an introduction to various meditation techniques, and 30 minutes of silent meditation per class. We will begin by working with the book "The Attention Revolution: Unlocking the Power of the Focused Mind," by Alan Wallace.

**Fourth Sundays (excluding December) at noon - Philosopher's Club:** In this class we will do Philosophy on par with an introductory college level class. Currently we are continuing our study of "The Consolation of Philosophy," by Boethius. In Nov. we will review book 1 and discuss book 2. In January we will discuss book 3. (Meets in the sanctuary.)

## Announcements

### Giving Opportunities Launched

For 20 years, we have offered our members and friends a variety of ways to bring a little happiness to the needy in our neighborhood. Each year, the social worker at Detroit Merit Academy gives us a list of 25 of those most in need of assistance along with the size of the family. Then we match the size of the basket to the size of the family. If more than 25 baskets come in, we take them to Nichols School where Colin and

Pat Gillis tutor.

There are many different ways to volunteer, from receiving and delivering baskets to checking and tagging baskets. Monetary donations are used to buy spiral-cut hams, bags of fresh fruit and hearty breads. The Church response has always been generous, and these gifts have been gratefully received as exemplified by this note sent last year from the mother and father of four children.

*"This letter is to show you how grateful me and my family was at Christmas from your of Love and Kindness. The Love you showed was so Christ Like. We were really in need this year. Sometimes you are embarrassed to ask for help but with your love and understanding seen is through. It generous people like yourself that have a light and it is shinning bright. Me and my Family want to say Thank you.*

*Thank you So So Much*

*Love the Johnson Family"*

Please leave your volunteer form with the ushers or the office administrator or contact Susie Boynton for further information.

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**Begin the Holiday Season by attending the Alliance Annual Christmas Luncheon on Tuesday, Dec 8th at 11:30am** in the church gallery. There will be punch and Hors d' Oeuvres, a concert by the North High School Choir and delicious food. Decorations will be provided by our own Resale Shop and will be available for purchase. This is also our opportunity to thank all of the volunteers both church and non-church members who work in our resale shop every Wednesday. We would love to have some of our GPUC men join us for this afternoon of food, fun and music. *Not For Women Only. The GPUC Alliance is open to both men and women.*

For reservations call Joan Hines.

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#### **Last Call: Scrip for the Holidays!**

The deadline to order cards for the holidays is December 2nd. Gift cards are the perfect way to recognize teachers, babysitters, mail carriers, hairdressers and others in your life with a little extra something at the holidays. And as always, you can put your household shopping dollars to work too by shopping with scrip at stores that participate in the program!

Follow this link for an order form and for more details about this fabulous fundraising program!

[GPUC Website](#)

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#### **Our next First Sunday Food Sharing will be December 6th.**

Our donations are taken to Crossroads East on Moross, just east of I-94. This location is close to our church home and has a food pantry, clothing closet, provides job assistance, and counseling. We will be collecting non-perishables such as cereal, noodles, rice, canned fruits, veggies, soups, and sauces. If you prefer to donate monetarily, your money is used to buy items such as eggs, milk, meat, produce, and bread. Our donations are greatly appreciated and really help keep the shelves, fridge, and freezer stocked. So far this year, GPUC has provided 9,209 pounds of food and toiletries to Crossroads East! Many, many thanks!  
Jenny Marck

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#### **2016 Auction Thank You!!**

This year's auction broke records for fundraising! The total received is creeping toward \$24,000. We still have some seats left at the parties. Sign-up sheets will be posted at church on the next few Sundays. Please check out the fun that's still available.

Thank you to all those who devoted time, energy, money and ideas to make this event a reality. It was a heroic team effort! Karen Webb and Robin Ramsay chaired, Jan Gray headed the huge job of Acquisitions, Juli Moore, Jill Crane and Mollie Fletcher planned and prepared the food, Christine Whitwell led the Junior Auction, Jennifer Semanision supervised the RE helpers, Veronica Smith coordinated the back room Accounting. Thanks to the many volunteers who helped gather donations, decorate, clean up, sell tickets, hand out treasures, etc. Thanks to all the donors. Thanks to Christy Winder and Russ Chavey for donating the champagne and glasses. Thanks to our wonderful emcees: Joe Buttiglieri, Rudy Wedenoja and Laurie Arora. It was wonderful to have Joseph at the piano, and fun to get to sing a song. Special thanks to everyone who bought something. This was certainly a community project!

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**GREAT GROUNDS CREW**

Thanks to all the folks who showed up for two Saturday mornings this fall to help maintain the church grounds. It's not the most exciting project to help with, but it is essential to keep the grounds in shape and make a good presentation to the community and visitors as well as our church family. Helping out for a couple hours on October 31 and November 14 were Cindi Arfken, Dave Biernat, Mark Franchett, Rudy Wedenoja, Sam Smith, Jennifer Semanision, Ed Marck, Amanda Batts, George Gray, Dave Ottenhoff, Christy Winder and Aaron Smith. Dave Biernat and Rudy Wedenoja went above and beyond spending an extra two hours helping cut down cut up and drag to the curb two dead/dying crab trees. I am sure there are others I have forgotten so I apologize to them. I look forward to seeing everyone out there in the spring. Russ Chavey for the Grounds Committee

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**STAR LIGHT, STAR BRIGHT  
A Holiday Concert**

Presented by The Grosse Pointe Community Chorus  
Sunday, December 13, 2015 at 3:30 pm  
First English Evangelical Lutheran Church  
800 Vernier Road, Grosse Pointe Woods  
Tickets: \$12 advance \$15 at door \$5 12 yrs. & under

STARRING GPUCers: Alan Browne, Birdi Hansen-Marr, Chris Vadino, Janet Weber  
DIRECTOR: Joseph Palazzolo

SPECIAL FEATURES: Dr. Sloane Artis - soloist, Children's Choir including GPUC's Miranda & Olivia Barba  
Tickets can be purchased from Alan, Birdi, Chris, Janet or Joseph  
or from the following local merchants:

Moehring Woods Florists                      Posterity: A Gallery                      Do, by hair co.

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**This concert is the second in the new series of quality musical entertainment & fundraising at GPUC.**

**Saturday, February 27, 2016 at 7:30 pm**  
Grosse Pointe Unitarian Church  
~ More details coming soon. ~

DEFINITELY an ENCHANTED EVENING of MUSICAL MASTERY not to be missed!  
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**The third concert of this series will be held on Saturday, April 16, 2016 at 7:30 pm**  
Grosse Pointe Unitarian Church

**PRESENTING: Franz Joseph Haydn's Theresienmesse**

with GPUC's Adult Choir, singers from GP Community Chorus & several other local church choirs  
PLUS a chamber orchestra accompaniment with violins, violas, cellos, basses - 20+ instrumentalists  
Haydn's Theresienmesse in B flat major is a stunning,  
yet rarely-performed, major work in choral-orchestral literature.  
~ Details to follow. ~

SAVE THESE DATES FOR DELIGHTFUL EVENINGS THAT WILL HELP RAISE MONEY FOR GPUC!

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**Newsletter Deadline**

Please submit your contribution to the next newsletter by Friday, December 18 at noon. They should be sent to [newsletter@gpuc.us](mailto:newsletter@gpuc.us).

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**HOLIDAY GIVING OPPORTUNITIES 2015**

GPUC commits to donate about 30 Christmas food baskets for the neediest families with children at Detroit Merit Academy School. If you are able to assist, please mark your donation below.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Contribute one or more whole baskets containing all items from both columns one & two.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Contribute one half-basket with all items from column one.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Contribute one half-basket with all items from column two.

\*list of requested food items below\*

\_\_\_\_\_ Contribute money to purchase hams, fresh fruit and bread for the Christmas baskets

Please write "Christmas Baskets" on the memo line of your check, or contribute cash.

\_\_\_\_\_ Donate sturdy new gloves and mittens, scarves, hats or socks to decorate the Mitten Tree for Detroit Merit Academy's children. Our goal is 100 items for the school.

\_\_\_\_\_ Bring new or gently used children's books (grades K-8) to put under the Mitten Tree. Each child receives the gift of a book.

\_\_\_\_\_ Volunteer to receive and move the Christmas baskets to the Church Library as members bring them to church on Sunday, December 13.

\_\_\_\_\_ Volunteer to shop for the Christmas baskets with the donated funds for hams, fresh fruit and bread on December 14-16.

\_\_\_\_\_ Volunteer to check and tag the Christmas baskets on Tuesday, December 15.

\_\_\_\_\_ Volunteer to load and deliver the baskets to Detroit Merit Academy for distribution on Thursday, December 17.

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

----- CUT HERE AND PLACE TOP SECTION IN BASKET IN THE CHURCH FOYER -----

**Christmas Baskets for Detroit Merit Academy Food Contribution**

Please provide the following items for a family of six - each column represents a half basket

Column #1	Column #2
Canned yams or instant potatoes	Box of cereal
Canned vegetables	Instant coffee or tea bags
Split peas or dried soup	Creamer
Canned or dried fruit	Instant cocoa
Macaroni and cheese	Stuffing or pasta
Peanut butter	Mustard
Jam or Jelly	Holiday cookies, candy or treats

Please bring your food to church on Sunday, December 13th. A decorated box, bag, or container is appreciated.

My contribution is: \_\_\_\_\_  
for donor reference

**Contact Information**  
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