



The Channing Connection

CHANNING MEMORIAL CHURCH
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

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December 2020

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**We are a Welcoming
Congregation!**

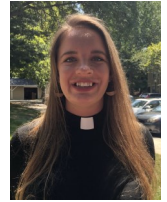


Wayside Pulpit

A baby is God's opinion
that the world should go
on.

—Carl Sandburg

December Minister's Column



When I turn on the TV I see holiday advertisements flickering across the scenes! Tables laden with food or an ad for just the right gift. We are entering into the holiday season, in the midst of a global pandemic. While we already may feel overwhelmed or struggling with grief, the holidays may amplify this. We may deeply miss those we love. Some people we love may be alone this year. While the holiday season may always be a hard time for some folks, this year it may feel even harder. And yet, remember, there is still joy.

In the midst of these flashy ads telling us what to buy and where to buy it, I wonder if we can shift the focus from the external to the internal. I wonder if we can each find a way to connect with our holy – whatever our holy may be. To some, this connection comes with a simple prayer. To others, meditation, or a nature walk. Whatever it is, it can be simple. I am reminded of Mary Oliver's poem *Prayer*.

It doesn't have to be
The blue iris, it could be
Weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
Small stones; just
Pay attention, then patch
A few words together and don't try
To make them elaborate, this isn't
A contest but the doorway
Into thanks, and a silence in which
Another voice may speak.

Even engaging with some weeds peeking through the cracks will do, reminding us of life amidst difficulty. Or noticing a small stone, a reminder of our strength that can overcome any obstacle. We can engage with these elements of nature, we can speak words to our holy, we can meditate or we can simply sit. Engaging with whatever we find to be holy can be a sacred way to heal.

And as we move forward in the holiday season, I look forward to celebrating within our special community! Whether lifting

Continued on next page

Minister

Reverend Jane Smith

410-203-0474 (office)
minister@channingmc.org

President:

David Fu ('22)

Vice President: Vacant

Treasurer:

Evelyn Grim ('21)

Secretary:

Kathleen Razmus ('21)

Trustees:

Patrick Beben('21)
Mel Currie ('22)
Colleen Rathbun ('21)

Newsletter Editors:

Cathy Fu
Ken Grim

To place an event on the calendar, in the Order of Service announcements, in the newsletter or in an allchanning email, send an email to: newsshare@channingmc.org

Send submittals for the January issue of *The Channing Connection* to newsshare@channingmc.org by **7:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 20, 2020.**

Minister's Column, continued from page 1

up Hanukkah, Solstice, or Christmas, we will have time to come together in joy and celebration. No matter what goes on in the world, we continue to remain a sacred, vibrant community at Channing Memorial Church. Each and every one of you is held in love.

Warmly,
Rev. Jane

Blue Holidays



Tuesday, December 8 7-8pm

It can be helpful to have a space to process the difficult moments of the holiday season. Some folks have lost a loved one. Some come from difficult family situations. Some are in recovery from alcohol or battle depression. For a multitude of reasons, many people struggle during this holiday season. This holiday season is unique as we have the added stress of a pandemic.

If this season is difficult for you, you are invited to this special program with Rev. Jane. We'll take time for prayer, meditation, ritual, and reflection. I ask you to reflect on two questions before our time together:

- What's weighing on your soul this holiday season?
- How do you plan to take care of yourself and your soul this holiday season?

Please reach out to me at minister@channingmc.org if you are interested in attending.

Know that you are all held in love.

Warmly,
Rev. Jane

Soul Matters for December: Stillness



Dear Channing members and friends,

Spiritual teacher and author Eckhart Tolle writes, “We have forgotten what rocks and plants still know; we have forgotten how to be still, to be ourselves, to be where life is here and now.” Stillness is a time to be, and this simple act offers us so much. Stillness allows us to center and to be ourselves – to better know ourselves. Stillness allows us to engage in a practice of mindfulness, grounded in the beauty and pain of the present moment, grasping on to life and what it has to offer. This month we have a chance to connect with that which is within us. We have a chance to connect with what truly matters to each and every one of us, to get reacquainted with ourselves in a world where so much serves as a distraction. Let this pause fill our souls and give us a renewed way to engage with the world around us.

Stillness is our worship theme for December, and the theme for our small groups. These small groups are special because they allow each member to deeply engage with the topic in multiple ways. In preparation for each month’s Small Group, I will send each group member a packet. You are invited to select from this packet one spiritual exercise and one question to reflect on before our meeting together. **While reviewing the packet ahead of time is a great way to prepare for group, please do not let a busy schedule deter you from participating.** Whatever amount of time you are able to dedicate to preparation is just the right amount of time!

I ask that you sign up ahead of time. Please use the link below. Please provide me your email address so that I can send you the packet for you to review. I will also provide all attendees a Zoom link the day of the Small Group. If the slot that you can attend is full, just let me know. We have opened our small groups to the public to share our gifts with the community. Feel free to invite friends. I am excited to explore the topic of Stillness with you!

Young Adults (20s, 30s, 40s):

Wednesday, Dec. 16 7:30-9pm

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70A0D4AACAF2AA1FC1-young8>

All ages:

Wednesday Dec. 9 6-7:30pm

Saturday, Dec. 19 1-2:30pm

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70A0D4AACAF2AA1FC1-soul4>

I hope to see you there!

Warmly,
Rev. Jane

President's Column



As I write this, I find myself just a bit shocked at the stark beauty of the leafless tree in our front yard and just a bit unprepared for the coming Holiday season. Though my deeper self well knows these yearly cycles, my everyday self somehow manages to be surprised by the signposts that indicate the passage of time. This month I share some thoughts about another yearly cycle: Church Stewardship.

You should now have access to the Stewardship for Us report (contact any board member if you need a copy). It contains truths about our congregation that we would all do well to examine carefully. Particularly, on page 8:

"Though the budget certainly reflects priority and necessary costs, it does not reflect all the aspirations and plans that the congregation articulated in its long-range plan, Vision and Growth plan, or the hopes described during the recent Cottage Meetings. It does, however, underscore Channing Memorial's longstanding commitment to ensuring spiritual comfort and sustenance for the congregation."


These two sentences "hold up a mirror" to our Congregation, and after our recent Board retreat, I am coming to the viewpoint that our visions and plans for the future are in need of a "reality check". More on this to come.

And intertwined with **both** our aspirations and our necessities is our need for worship space. At the November board meeting, our intrepid Space Search Team presented three detailed and well-researched scenarios: buy, build, and rent, for a future home for our Church. I thank them for their work. Each scenario had its challenges and exciting possibilities, but common to all was the fact that **none** could be sustainably achieved with our current patterns of Stewardship.

What are our current patterns of Stewardship? What kind of changes to our Stewardship are necessary? The report has the answers, and I believe that reimplementing Stewardship is a top priority for our Church as we move forward.

Read the report!

—David

		Stewardship Update	
		<u>October 2020 Year to Date</u>	
Total Operating Income			\$ 44,878
Total Operating Expenses			\$ 46,301
Difference			(\$1,422)

Scooby Doo Wants You...To Participate in the Channing Auction!



Our cherished annual event will be held on **Saturday, January 23, 2021**. We have lots of fun planned:

First, you can order your own dinner from Trattoria Amore in Dorsey Search Shopping Center, where Linden Hall is located. We will attempt to arrange for our carry out pickup at the same Scooby time (TBD - late afternoon) in order to see each other in person from a social distance! You will also receive some special Scooby Treats! We will also create a delivery team of volunteers to deliver your meal and your special Scooby Treats to you at your home. (Contact michael_colleen@verizon.net if you can be on the Scooby delivery team, or if you have a Mystery Machine to make deliveries. Har har.)

Next, we will return to our homes and log into Zoom to share our meal, enjoy some Scooby entertainment, and participate in our live auction.

We will share a separate, independent link to an on-line silent auction site, where you can bid on spectacular items donated by members and friends of the congregation. Silent auction bidding will open on Friday, January 22 and will be open until the evening of Sunday, January 24.

There will also be a link to a Sign-up Genius for our very popular Fixed Price items - the link will go live Saturday afternoon, January 23, and will stay open until slots are filled.

We need donations to make this auction work. Items, services, online fun and games - put on your creativity hat and let fly! Consider the following:

- Host a virtual get-together - the church and several members have Zoom accounts, which, subject to their availability, can be reserved for church functions. Teach a skill, host a murder mystery, facilitate a discussion of an important topic - the possibilities are endless!
- Plan a fun outdoor, socially distanced event.
- Donate tangible items, such as artwork, handicrafts, or themed baskets. Group baskets are always popular and a nice way for groups to work together to make a plan. Delivery of tangible items - you can include delivery of your item as part of your donation, specify that the item can be picked up at a mutually agreeable time, or team up with someone who can help you out with delivery.
- Services are still a great idea (sewing, yard cleanup, etc.).

To donate, send the following information to michael_colleen@verizon.net by **December 20**:

1. Title of Item
2. Description of Item, Event, Lesson, Service: Please include enough information to show people why they might want to bid on your donation.
3. Price Per Participant (if fixed price) OR Minimum bid (if auction item)
4. Maximum number of participants (if applicable)

Continued on next page

Auction, continued from page 5

5. Event date/s & time (if applicable. Please include day of the week and calendar date.)
6. Location (if applicable) or delivery/pick-up logistics
7. Name/s, e-mail address, and phone number of donor/s
8. Other information (lead time needed, etc.). Important for this year's donations - photographs! Please include one or more photographs of your auction donation with your information.

— *Colleen Rathbun*



Attendees in their finery

Channing Tea Party: Fancy Hats and Treats

We had such a great time dressing in our finest for an online tea party last month. Donations to the church totaled \$225, and the joy of sharing time and treats was priceless.

Thanks to organizers Nancy Hariani and Marian Vessels for a wonderful time.

Outreach Assistance Needed

The Outreach Committee would like your assistance! We are working on our outreach to the community and to potential attendees. We have two places where you can find information, we'd like you to look at:

- a Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ChanningMemorialChurch/>
- a page that comes up when you Google Channing Memorial that includes a sidebar.

We encourage all of you to visit these sites, "like" us, and write reviews. These efforts will keep our pages fresh and engaging to visitors looking for a new church. It takes a village to assure that our social media venues are interesting, engaging and current.

— *Marian Vessels*





Channing Cookie Swap, 2020

We're starting a new tradition at Channing: a holiday cookie swap! This fun activity allows you to sample cookies from some of the best bakers in the UUniverse. And we've adapted the activity to be pandemic-safe! Ready to bake and swap? Here's what to do:

- Sign up and let us know what you'll be baking. The deadline to sign up is **Saturday, December 5.**
- Bake three dozen of your holiday cookies (homemade only, please) and put them in small plastic bags (details to follow).
- Drop off your treats at the Park Avenue office on **Saturday, December 12 from 11am – 2 pm.**
- A specially-trained cookie elf will deliver your awesome holiday assortment later that weekend. Yum!

Interested? Here's the link. <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f084fa4ad2ba46-channing1>
Access code: bake

(Fine print: If you cannot drop off at Park Avenue, please contact one of the elves for assistance. Because of the nature of the cookie swap, we cannot cater to special diets or allergies. Thank you.)

The Cookie Elves: *Cathy Fu, Nancy Hariani and Kris Tyssowski*

Community Connections: Still Here for You



As we head into the winter, remember that there is a team at Channing ready to help members and friends who are affected by COVID-19. The Community Connections Committee consists of Patrick Beben, Mel Currie, Cathy Fu, David Fu, Anne Hart, and Diana Mosley. We are dedicated to matching folks needing help—groceries, meals, or just a conversation—with folks in our congregation who are wanting to help.

There are two ways to get help, or to offer help:

- Fill out the Connections survey at <https://forms.gle/XxDBeKD5NiWbXWEb6>. The survey takes an assessment of your situation, resources you may have to offer, and needs you may have. This form can be filled out multiple times, so if your situation changes at any point during this virus, you can update the form to help us know about your changing situation. This survey allows the committee to coordinate care needs and responses.
- Reach the committee directly at connections@channingmc.org if you have any further needs or resources you would like to share.

Our goal is to offer as much support as we can throughout this difficult time. If you need us, reach out.



Stewardship Corner

December is that time of year when we feel especially generous and increase our contributions to various charitable organizations. It is also the time of year when we think ahead to April 15 and do some end of year tax planning. Please consult a tax advisor regarding your tax planning, but do consider Channing Memorial Church both as a recipient of that generosity and as a means of reducing your tax bill if you are still able to itemize.

Your donation does not have to be in the form of cash. If you are retired and old enough to take a Required Minimum Distribution from your IRA or retirement fund, there may be a tax advantage in designating that distribution directly to Channing, instead of receiving the distribution yourself and writing a check. You can also contribute appreciated investments, other than real estate, such as shares of appreciated stock, to Channing Memorial Church. Some of our members even pay their annual pledges this way. This can result in a significant tax benefit but, again, consult your tax advisor. Some investments are not eligible for this tax benefit. Contact our treasurer, Evelyn Grim, if you would like to make a contribution other than cash.

Enjoy the holidays and, as always, thank you for your gifts. It is your support all year long that enables Channing to fulfill its mission to invite seekers into spiritual community, connect souls in mystery and wonder, and ignite compassion into action.

—*Evelyn Grim*, Treasurer

Board Bits



In the opinion of this scribe, this board has mastered the art of meetings. They accomplish far more than I ever thought possible in two hours, especially in a UU setting. This month, I was inspired by these discussions:

1. Financial scenarios for space options were presented by the Space Team and discussed.
2. The Outreach and Growth Committee charge was adopted.
3. Additional discussions about using the findings from the Stewardship 4 Us program.
4. Planning for the usual mid-year town hall meeting, to take place at the end of January.
5. Discussed ways to increase coordination among committees.

— *Julie Fitzer*

From the 8th Principle Committee



On October 18th, we discussed the proposed 8th Principle and what it means to us. Since then, Kathleen Razmus, Ron Meservey and I have formed a committee to focus our efforts on 8th Principle discussions. Anyone who is interested is welcome to join us.

Proposed 8th Principle of Unitarian Universalism:

“We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.”

As part of our work, we will discuss adopting the 8th Principle as a congregation. We will offer monthly discussions after service, with the first one scheduled for December 13th. Included in our post-worship discussions will be a time to openly and respectfully talk about what it means as a congregation to adopt this principle, and whether or not we would like to do so. Everyone is invited to attend and share your voice. We look forward to these fruitful and important conversations.

Our work will also explore what it might mean as a congregation to live by the 8th Principle. In order to do this, throughout the year we will examine systemic racism and how it has injured ourselves, our community, and our world.

Our first discussion will be about this podcast https://podcast.app/isabel-wilkerson-this-history-is-long-this-history-is-de-e100978294/?utm_source=and&utm_medium=share. If you would like to participate, please listen to the podcast prior to December 13th service. There will be some questions to focus our discussion. These will be sent out closer to the date.

Other groups have been doing work that relates to the 8th Principle. Here are a few:

- Book club discussion on *Racism as Zoological Witchcraft: A Guide to Getting Out* was held on November 12th.
- Future book club in February 2021 to discuss *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*
- *Me and White Supremacy Sharing Circle* - small group discussion starting in December
- Social Justice Team purchase of Black Lives Matter poster, to be displayed at the church office.
- Future movie nights are being considered

If you would like to explore the background information about the 8th principle, check out this link from the UUA, preferably before December 13th. <https://www.8thprincipleuu.org/background>. Thank you!

—Angela Lesperance

New Programming for Families with Children: Soulful Homes



We have some exciting new programming coming up for parents and caregivers who are raising the next generation of Unitarian Universalists! In partnership with First Church in Salem, UU, **we are introducing the new Soul Matters program**

“Soulful Home” This is a small group ministry that welcomes meaning-seekers of all ages to explore questions such as “What does it mean to be a family of Stillness?” in a warm, interactive setting. **We will gather each month for a check-in, an interactive story, an intergenerational activity, and special time for guided discussion among caregivers.** We will also offer a [monthly discovery packet](#) for those who wish to explore our themes and practices as a family. Connect with other parents and caregivers as we discover the sacred in our everyday lives.

We will hold our gatherings **the third Friday of the month** in a Zoom room. Our next session will be held **Friday, Dec 18 from 6-7:30pm.**

If you are interested, please email Rev. Jane at minister@channingmc.org

In order to make certain programming sustainable for small churches, it's helpful to partner with another small church. Working together with the First Church in Salem allows us to do just that! We are blessed to have another small congregation with a thriving RE program to work with. I know we will create some exciting programming together!

Warmly,
Rev. Jane



Channing Votes Website Is Now Channing Justice

During our recent national election we constructed a Channing Votes website to help guide us through the electoral process and offer of opportunities to become involved. Now that the election is over (hopefully), we've repurposed the website as Channing Justice to help inform and educate us about public policy issues, to offer us ways to join with other UU's to advocate for policies that match our values and to identify opportunities to act. During the upcoming MD General Assembly session, the site will provide information about legislation of interest and ways to advocate.

You can visit the website at <https://jimcal87.wixsite.com/channingjustice> or from Channing's website www.channingmc.org/wp/ On Channing's home page, select Community / Social Responsibility / Channing Social Justice Team.

For more information please contact Jim Caldiero, jimcal87@gmail.com

Yours in faith and justice,

—*Jim Caldiero*



LH3 Sponsor a Family— Donations Needed

This holiday season, Loving Hearts Helping Hands Youth Ministry and Channing are sponsoring a family in need through The ARC Baltimore. The ARC Baltimore provides support and services to people with developmental disabilities and the families who care for them. We have been assigned a family of four in Northeast Baltimore. We will buy gifts and gift cards to help make their holidays a little brighter. LH3 will then wrap and tag the gifts before delivering them to the ARC office for distribution to the family.

The ARC sent us a list of the ages and genders of the family members along with a few suggestions for gifts. Please sign up to donate either a specific (new) gift from the list or sign up to contribute toward the gift cards.

<<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/5080B4EAEA62FA3F58-lh3baltimore>>

Then, drop the unwrapped gifts off in the waterproof totes by the back door of the church office, or contact me at kathleenrazmus@gmail.com to make other arrangements. Mail your checks for contributions to the Park Avenue address: Channing Memorial Church, 3677 Park Avenue, Ellicott City, MD 21043. (Put LH3 in the check's memo line.) We need all the gifts **no later than Wednesday 12/2**, so don't delay, shop today! Let's do this!

—Kathleen Razmus, on behalf of LH3

Blessing Bag Pickup at Park Avenue



Blessing Bags are ready for pickup at the church office: 3677 Park Ave Ellicott City 21043



Thank you so much to everyone who donated items for the Blessing Bags for people in need. LH3(Loving Hearts, Helping Hands) had a great time on Zoom putting the bags together. A big thank you to Des, Olivia, Charlotte, Nate, Wyatt, Baz and Holly for putting the bags together. They are now ready for pick up from the tote near the back door at the church office. Please stop by and pick up several bags to keep in your car for those times you're driving and come across someone in need.

For those who don't know, Blessing Bags are bags full of toiletries, socks, water and other essential items that we can give to folks who need them. LH3 is a group of children and youth who meet once a month to plan and carry out service projects to help make the world a better place. If you or a young person you know is interested in participating, email me for more information on how to get involved.

—Kathleen Razmus



Ledo Night Grazie

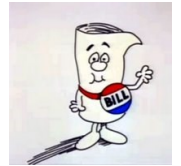
Thanks to all who supported the Ledo night and Zoom party. I'm proud to report that we exceeded my expectations! We earned \$180.

I counted 18 separate households participating (by households I mean a group of folks that live together). During the Zoom party, I estimate we had 22 individuals at some point during the night. There was also a separate youth group meeting/party happening at the same time led by Lynne and, later that night, there was a Young Adult Soul Matters meeting. It was an awesome church activity night!

Most importantly, great fun was had by all.

—Julie Fitzer

Legislative Update



The Maryland General Assembly will convene next month on January 13, 2021 under restrictive guidelines because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Citizens will still be able to submit written testimony in support of bills of interest. Among these bills are several immigration-related proposals. As the bills are introduced and considered in committees, I will provide more information if you are inclined to offer testimony. You can find the four bills under consideration at <https://www.uulmmd.org/im-2020-session>

The UU Legislative Ministry of MD will also support and track bills relating to Gun Violence, Economic Justice, Climate Change, Medical Aid in Dying, Affordable Health Care, Education and LGBTQ Rights. You can learn about these issues at <https://www.uulmmd.org/our-issues>

For more information, please contact me at jimcal87@gmail.com

—Jim Caldiero

Wednesdays for Young Adults at Church



The **Young Adult Game Night and Virtual Potluck** is back for the fall. Join us every **first Wednesday from 7—9 pm**. We'll have games and conversation. Anyone in their 20's, 30's and 40's welcome. This event is open to the public and folks are encouraged to share this event with anyone who may be interested. Contact Patrick B. for information.

And the **Young Adult Soul Matters** group will be held on the **third Wednesday** of the month! See the Soul Matters article on page 3 of this publication.

—Rev. Jane



December 2020



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
All events *online* unless otherwise noted		1 1—4 pm Minister's Office Hours Committee on Ministry Mtg	2 Space Search Mtg. 7 pm Young Adult Game Night	3 Men's Group 10 am Clearing as Spiritual Practice 1pm	4 Covenant Circle, Connections, Membership and Outreach Meetings	5 Stewardship Committee Meeting
6 10 am Sunday Service Youth RE	7	8 1—4 pm Minister's Office Hours Online LDNC Mtg	9	10 Channing Book Club 10 am Hanukkah begins at sundown	11 Connections, Worship Mtgs 	12
13 9 am LH3 Meeting 10 am Sunday Service	14	15 1—4 pm Minister's Office Hours Online 7 pm Board of Trustees	16	17 Clearing as Spiritual Practice 1pm	18 Covenant Circle, Connections Mtgs Soulful Home 6 - 7:30 pm	19 Men's Group 10 am
20 10 am Sunday Service Youth RE	21	22 1—4 pm Minister's Office Hours Online	23	24	25 	26 
27 9 am Spirit Play 10 am Sunday Service Youth RE	28	29 1—4 pm Minister's Office Hours Online	30	31 	No groceries to Westside—we are donating \$ instead 	

Channing Memorial Church
Unitarian Universalist
3677 Park Avenue
Ellicott City, MD 21043

On the web:
www.ChanningMC.org

Channing Memorial Church, Unitarian Universalist

Our mission is to invite seekers into spiritual community, connect souls in mystery and wonder, and ignite compassion into action.

We are a church of liberal religious worship that inspires its members on their spiritual journeys. We derive a common spiritual center from Jewish and Christian roots while drawing inspiration from other world religions; promote religious education for all ages; create a welcoming, supporting, and caring community; and work together to build a better world.