

- the Beacon -

Sunday Services at 10:30 AM

www.uucgt.org

Email: office@uucgt.org

Vol 58 Issue 12

December Services

December 2021



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Grand Traverse

6726 Center Road, Traverse City, MI
49686-1802
231-947-3117

**UUCGT Office is closed
until further notice.**

Minister

Rev. Alex Jensen
alexjensen@uucgt.org

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Renée Herman Russell
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Religious Education

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Adult Education

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Office Administrator

Guy William Molnar
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BOARD OF TRUSTEES

2021-2022

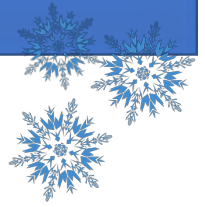
Pam Hendrick	President
Chris Walter	Vice Pres
Tom Darnton	Treasurer
David Hassing	Secretary
Mary Anne Rivers	Trustee
Pat Light	Trustee
Kat Norman	Trustee

**Board Meeting
Wednesday 12.8.21
7:00 PM**

Date	Participants	Title / Description
12.5.21	Rev. Alex Jensen Andi Kramer & Susan Smith	Wonder & Joy <i>We're not in the Sanctuary yet, but...</i> The holidays are often a season of experiences with joy and wonder. In this service, we invite you to connect with your inner child and to experience the warmth and coziness of this time. We will explore spiritual truths found in the joy of children.
12.12.21	Rev. Alex Jensen Dan Tholen	Blue Holidays We will be soon! The holidays carry joyous celebration, they also bring with them hidden pains. For this 'Blue Holidays' service, we will make space to hold the sorrow and loneliness that sometimes comes with this season. It is only in honoring our pain that we can also open ourselves to joy.
12.19.21	Rev. Alex Jensen Mary Van Valin	Seasons of Light <i>In-person yet? Maybe, maybe not...</i> So many of the world's faiths and religious traditions have celebrations and rituals honoring darkness and light. Together, we'll explore the joy found in the connective interplay as both dark and light meet each
12.21.21	Nan Worthington Misty Sheehan	Winter Solstice <i>And this evening it won't matter.</i> An outside service celebrating the longest night of the year, when the sun is at its lowest.
12.24.21 4:00 PM 5:30 PM 7:00 PM	Rev. Alex Jensen Betsy Hammerberg & Andi Kramer	Christmas Eve <i>It's nice to have something special to look forward to, isn't it?</i> Come and experience the joy of Christmas with fellow congregants in a traditional Christmas Eve service. Services at 4:00, 5:30, and 7:00 PM.
12.26.21	People's Church of Kalamazoo Virtual Service	The Gifts of Christmas We will join as guests with the People's Church of Kalamazoo for a virtual service on the Gifts of Christmas. Please see http://peopleschurch.net/ for service information. UUCGT will NOT be offering its own Sunday Service but is encouraging all to attend this virtual service.



MINISTER'S MESSAGE *from* REV. ALEX



Dear Ones,

We have arrived! The month of our hybrid start to our services!

This is such an exciting moment for our community after being in this world of a pandemic for over a year and a half. It has taken so much work, effort, thinking, and visioning to get this far. And we are proud to host a limited capacity of people in our Sanctuary once again; this means the world to our Staff, as we do our work so much because we love being in community with you. As your Minister, I am proud of this moment and proud of us for making it possible. We have proven time and time again that the church is not the building. The congregation is really our enduring connections to one another.

“We have proven time and time again that the church is not the building. The congregation is really our enduring connections to one another.”

While we still have a long way to go until we resume operations at a full capacity, I cannot stress enough how special this is for us. To get here, we've endured so many months of being physically apart. We've had to adapt under less-than-ideal circumstances. We've had to keep pace with our changing world and how we do our services, sometimes in a pinch. And yet, we rose to this task.

In addition to your Board, your Staff, and every one of you who has stepped up to help make this change possible, we've had to make some big changes to our building. We've purchased a new technology setup for a quality live streaming our services. We've also upgraded our HVAC system for increased air flow and filtra-

tion. So much of our physical preparations for this moment have come at a financial cost outside of our operational budget, even if the building itself is not the congregation.

In order to ensure that UUCGT continues to minister to this community and to one another, we are asking that you might steward this congregation through making a generous financial gift. If a donation at this time is just not possible, consider stepping up to assist to make these hybrid services happen. It has taken so much for us to be at this point. You all have given so much already in support of this vibrant community. So that we can continue strongly financially as a religious community, we need your help.

As you go into this season—a time of generosity, as well as sharing in the joy and wonder of this moment of our hybrid opening in this congregation's journey—consider supporting the mission and ministry of this congregation. This is a shared ministry, partly in our contributions and gifts. Consider giving what you can afford, whatever the amount or capacity; giving of your time, talent, and treasure. If you have more than enough in this season, your gift to this congregation will have a deep and far-reaching impact.

This is an opportunity for us to come back together stronger. I know we have what it takes. I know this congregation's generous heart and spirit. I am so proud to know you and to be at this pivotal moment with you.

From your Minister, with deep faith, enthusiasm, and love,

Rev. Alex Jensen





ENDOWMENT FUND COMMITTEE

News of Gifts to Endowment Fund

It is with full hearts that we acknowledge the donors to the **Mark Gustafson Memorial Bench**. We said at the beginning that any extra funds would go to the Endowment Fund in Marks's name. You were so generous, that after the cost of the bench, plaque and sign there will be at least \$2,000 given to the Endowment Fund!

The bench will be placed on the pathway in the spring, marking the Fourth Principle: Seeking Truth and Meaning. Mark certainly nudged us all in that direction. We would like to thank all contributors, and if your contributed and do not see your name listed, please call Mary Van Valin.

Our thanks to*:

Mary Kiner, Price and Jane Watts, Bob and Nancy Doughty, Kay Sturgeon, Whitmore Brothers Construction, Charles Grabel and Connie Armstrong, Edward and Ingrid Brophy, Mark and Mary Jo Cohen, Richard Faller and Barbara Einhaus-Faller, Kim and Kevin Gribi, Mary Grover, John Hoffman, Lynn and James McAndrews, Richard Miller, Joy and Lou Platteborze, Robert Prentice, Horace and Autumn Smith, Mary Van Valin, Rick and Chris Walter, Monica Weiner, Jan Zerbel, Renato and Luvaminda Lee, Betsy Emdin, the Family of Mark and Solveig Gustafson, Bonnie Mathias, Mike and Sandra McDonald, Gerald and Ann Swaney, Douglas and Margaret Wozniak, Charles Brackett, Ellie Smith, Jalene Moore, Robert Dean, Marcia Bellinger, Elizabeth and Peter Bruning.

Recently the Endowment Fund has been blessed with other memorial tributes recognizing Paula Ward from her husband, Paul Ward, Bob Prentice, Marcia Bellinger and Mary Van Valin, and recognizing Dorothee Hansen and Sylvia Mitchell from their families and others. Your thoughtfulness and recognition of these women is heart-warming for each was a valued member of our community. We thank you! With funds from these Memorials, over \$6,000 will be added to the Endowment Fund.

Nancy Doughty, secretary to the Endowment Committee

*as of this writing

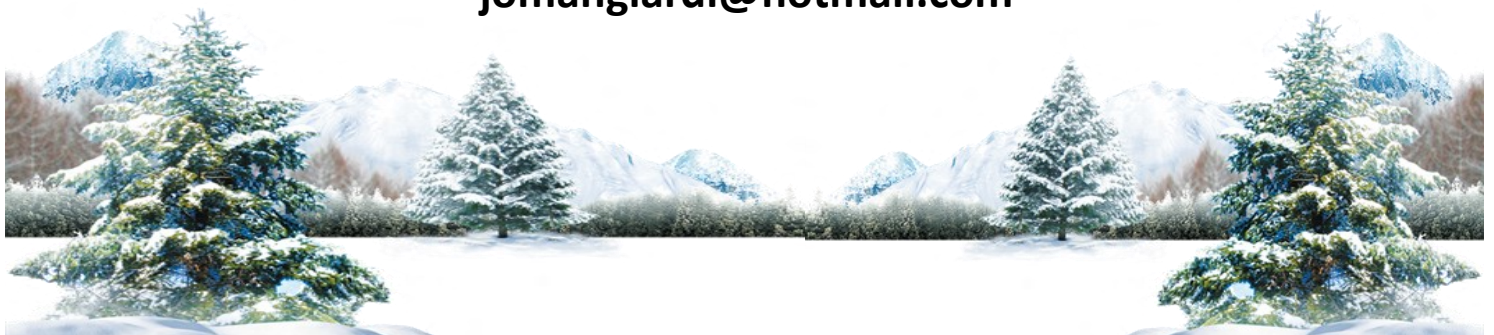


THE BEACON

Have something for the Beacon?

Send to editor Amanda Mangiardi by the 24th of the month.

jomangiardi@hotmail.com



Program Council December 2021

Fifteen members (13 via Zoom and 2 via email) met November 12, 2021. Following opening words, chalice lighting and official approval of the 10/8/2021 meeting minutes, Rick summarized that final edits of the Getting Involved document were nearly ready for inclusion on the UUCGT Website, final preparations for a UUCGT Bonfire scheduled for 11/21/21 were complete (due to weather this was postponed) and Sunday Services had initiated a fund drive to collect \$700 for \$100 gift cards to Meijer to be distributed to 7 immigrant families.

During Committee check-ins we had extensive discussion about supporting Green Sanctuary's proposal to sign the Oil and Water Don't Mix/Shut Down Line 5 campaign. It was overwhelmingly supported. Program Council will present a proposal to the Board Dec 8 to call for a congregational vote on this action.

Amanda Mangiardi, Congregational Care Team summarized that 88 Zoom services were provided since March 22, 2020. Live streamed services were scheduled to start on November 14th with full transition to Hybrid Zoom, Live Stream and in person services scheduled for December 5th (this may be delayed to December 12th or 19th).

Hal Gurian and Karl Keinath reported 200 letters have been sent with information about the Endowment fund currently at \$150,000, encouraging members and friends to contribute. Mary Van Valin mentioned the Mark Gustafson Bench Fund has excess money to give to Endowment since over \$2,000 was received in donations.

Sandra initiated Discussion about Chalkboard Wall by Kitchen. It has not been used for several years and is difficult to clean. The Program Council approved having this chat board painted over in an appropriate color matching the rest of the Social hall. If a similar type of notice board is needed in the future by RE, a White board should be purchased for placement in the RE wing.

Karl Keinath highlighted that with the preparations for re-opening and hybrid services, significant non-budgeted expenses (\$45,000) had been incurred. Due to reserves in our account carried over from 2020-2021, these expenses were able to be paid, however the finance committee is recommending to the Board to have a year-end Fund Drive to replenish these reserves.

Emmy Lou reviewed many Social Justice Action (SJA) activities that will happen over the next months. These include: 1. Congregational read of Caste in February 2022; 2. Further recognizing original owners of this land with a plaque; 3. merging 7 Grandfather Teachings along UUCGT Meandering Path; Possible 4. Jan Zerbel research on Indigenous facts for occasional inclusion in Beacon; and 5. Work on Welcoming Congregation Renewal.

In summary the Program Council had a very full meeting and covered a lot of ground. Our next meeting will be held **December 10 at 3:00 PM on Zoom**. Please attend if you are interested in this phase of the inner workings of UUCGT.

Rick Walter: Chair Program Council



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION *from* RE DIRECTOR BETSY HAMMERBERG

We had two wonderful in-person, outdoor gatherings in October and November. In October we celebrated fall by making nature mandalas; building "bone" bridges; and creating (and eating) tortilla wraps inspired by sugar skulls. In November we discussed the complicated history of Thanksgiving and then painted rocks; the rocks were created to celebrate the things we are grateful for and/or remind us of the indigenous people in our area.

We are still working on plans for our in-person gathering in December - stay tuned!



"Kindness is like snow—it beautifies everything it covers." – Kahlil Gibran

December "tis is the season" in which we celebrate both the lovely whiteness of winter and the joyfulness of giving.

All of these members of our congregation would probably appreciate calls, cards, just a friendly "Hello," or other demonstrations of your care.

Sending our love and concern to those who will spend the holiday season without their partners

Paul Ward
Solveig Gustafson
Bill Hanson

Keeping in our thoughts

Shari Cope
Barb Bloomer
Kay Wentzel
Marge Rundell
Gary Deavel
Ann Chinn

Grateful for their continued improvement

Nancy Fraser
Don Fraser
Ellie Smith
Pam Hendrick
Susan Smith
Stan Cain

YOUR CONGREGATIONAL CARE TEAM

Rev. Alex Jensen	231-947-3117	alexjensen@uucgt.org
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Co-chair: Pat Light	231-409-8195	patricialight@sbcglobal.net
Judith Briggs	231-228-4655	judithbriggs3@gmail.com
Barb Gibson	231-360-8284	barbgibson40@gmail.com
Hal Gurian	410-340-7323	hgurian1@gmail.com
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Marty Leavenworth	231-421-8081	martyleavenworth@gmail.com
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Christie McGue	231-941-1923	clmcgue@gmail.com
Connie Metcalf	231-313-3714	cmetcalf633@gmail.com
Millie Putz	989-330-2611	melindaputz@me.com





Thanksgiving and Christmas are times when we especially think of others and what to give family and friends. It is the end of the year, and many financially look at their finances and give as generously as they think they can to charitable organizations. These gifts are important and are part of our Social culture. Our society depends on it.

Here in our more wintery climate, we have Safe Harbor, a merciful housing for those experiencing homelessness. There are also food pantries, nursing homes, and nursery schools sometimes available for those in need of some assistance. Many of these are peopled by volunteers giving of their time. Yes, we value money but is time a valued precious commodity?

I think time is an amazing gift. How many times have we been rewarded when we gave time to a child, to an elderly relative, to a wheelchair bound friend in need? Giving time seems to reverberate over and over. It has the quality to reward the giver and the recipient and thus encourage more giving in the giver. Others become aware and participate in their giving of time and want to join in too. Some givers even solicit and encourage others to give.

“How many times have we been rewarded when we gave time to a child, to an elderly relative, to a wheelchair bound friend in need?”

The giving here is the gift of time. Those of us who raised children and have elderly in our midst know how much time we give them. They understandably always want more which can be stressful for the giver. We can share this need for more time with others. That is where nursery schools, grandparents child sitting, home health care workers, even neighbors come in. And sometimes we do not know who needs our attention for time.

Our Congregational Care Committee knows many who need help, but other members of our congregation also know some who could use some assistance. The pandemic and isolation has been hard on all of us but particularly on the young, teens, and elderly. Can we gather together and give some time to those who are feeling the pain of the pandemic? Zoom is not a panacea, but it sure beats exposure to a deadly virus. Some of us are willing to offer maybe a biweekly Zoom meeting to listen to each other and share our feelings over the loss of contacts and freedom. Can we give each other the time we need and want? Those who are at a loss for companionship with time, shall we try a meeting via Zoom? Could we gather with our pains of loneliness after the “giving” frenzy has quieted down? We could divide into groups depending on age, need, whatever is comfortable, and help each other feel less at a loss. I am willing to monitor such a supportive caring group making sure we all get to speak and try to express ourselves and share. This would not at all be a therapy group, but a pure friendly sharing group, an opportunity to be “together” even though, yes, another Zoom. I am sure others would come forth in our little friendly groups to make sure we all listen and can talk as our wants get clarified.

Let the Congregational Care Committee, Joanie Jackson or Pat Light, and others, know if you are interested. All will be confidential of course if the group wants it so. Time is really the most precious gift of all! Can we arrange to give it to each other here in our congregation?

Hope over these holidays, we all get that gift of time and can also give that most precious gift. Enjoy in good health!



Your Board of Trustees had an all-day “Start Up Workshop” on Saturday, October 30 with Rev. Alex and Lisa Presley, Congregational Life Consultant, MidAmerican Region UUA. Lisa is based in Kalamazoo, MI and we had lively, thoughtful discussions on Zoom.

The purpose of a Start Up Workshop at the beginning of a new minister’s tenure at a fellowship or congregation is to ensure the Board and Minister are on the same page in imagining how to share the ministry of the congregation.

Lisa is an excellent facilitator, allowing time to get with us, and for each of us to get to know each other more deeply in sharing our stories of our relationship with UUCGT. Finally we took turns listing an area of our congregation’s ministry followed by discussion and deciding where Primary or Shared Responsibility rested - Minister, Board, Staff, Shared, and Who are the Consultants and Collaborators.

By the end of the workshop a document was developed that also includes areas that require more conversation for completion. Your Board will share this information with you in the coming months. It was definitely time well-spent.

David Hassing
Board Secretary



Thanksgiving for most of us is a time of bounty and celebration.

For our immigrant neighbors, this time of year is not easy. Since our congregation could not gather for our traditional Thanksgiving feast last year, instead we provided turkeys for immigrant families. Again, this year, we cannot gather, so the Sunday Services Committee, the Social Justice Action Committee, and Program Council collaborated to see what our neighbors most needed, rather than assume they would love turkey like we do!

When asked by Gladys Munoz, who works with the **Peace and Justice Advocacy** group in our region, the families said gift cards at Meijers would be even better than a turkey. This congregation rallied, and in less than two weeks, seven \$100 gift cards were funded for the families.

When they were delivered to Gladys for distribution, she said over and over, “Such a compassionate congregation!” We thank you for your generosity and spontaneity! Extra funds will be held to see if there is need during the winter holidays.

A special thank you to Mary Van Valin who organized this and delivered the gift cards to Gladys.



BOARD SUMMARY



The Board is busy helping to keep things in motion as the UUCGT moves through transitions and lays the building blocks for a strong future.

- Geoff Norman-Anderson has been hired as a tech coordinator to help with our upcoming hybrid Sunday Services.
- Staff and the finance committee are working through a transition to new software to handle the UUCGT finances. It's a system with capabilities nicely sized for our needs. The reports run thus far aren't yet perfect but the team is working to make everything run smoothly.
- We agreed on the purchase of a laptop computer. Betsy's computer will be used for visuals and Zoom room so an additional one is needed to run live streaming.
- David Hassing was elected to board secretary after Pat Light requested to step out of the role.
- Reopening costs are dipping into reserves and the forecast for pledges falls short of keeping us out of the red overall. The pledge drive is coming up so we'll hope for a good boost. Meanwhile the finance team was asked to put some data together for the board to review. The new stewardship team will also be meeting soon and will be tasked with generating ideas for funds generation.
- We welcomed the news that the new Stewardship has been assembled. It comprises Dusty Culton, Alison Kadlec, Judy Myers, Alan Ritter, Mary Anne Rivers-Friese and they can invite more members as needed.
- We agreed to allow the newly combined groups of Indivisible Grand Traverse and Indivisible Traverse City to rent our building for their meetings. The board-approved capacity limits and pandemic safety protocols in place would be followed.
- The re-opening parameters agreed upon by the board is yet in need of specific language regarding groups eating/drinking while in the building. It's a complex issue that the board has continued to discuss over email chain since the meeting as we craft a policy that balances the needs of users and community safety.
- Rev. Alex asked us to also think through policies for special events like memorials or weddings upcoming holiday events and whether exceptions will be made to allow unvaccinated children into the sanctuary at those times. The board will work with the ROTF and discuss more detailed language for policy at our next meeting.
- The board is still meeting virtually over Zoom. The meetings are open and anyone interested is welcome to attend.

Next Meeting – DATE: December 8, 2021





MESSAGE FROM YOUR FINANCE COMMITTEE AND THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

What a blessing it is to celebrate our emergence from the shock and sacrifice of our pandemic experience into the new light cast about our sanctuary! As members of your Board of Trustees and Finance Committee, we are deeply aware of the efforts of so many that have brought us to this point. We are also deeply grateful to the past leadership of UUCGT which did so much to prepare us to face these recent challenges to our very existence. Those who went before us built the solid spiritual and financial foundation that enabled us to weather the first year of the pandemic. During 20-21 we not only learned how to be together on Zoom, we engaged in a congregation-wide effort that brought into our pulpit a new settled minister to lead our mission to the Grand Traverse Community. We entered our 21-22 budget year with a small surplus carried over from the operational budget from 20-21.

As 21-22 got under way, committed to returning to our mission work, we set about creating both a safe space for in person worship and an engaging digital experience for those who chose to attend virtually. We knew that the worship experience would be different. We knew that the virus would be with us and that we must adapt our practices. We knew that providing a quality digital experience would also make our message available to a much broader audience. Thanks to the efforts of our predecessors, we had financial reserves that allowed us to take bold steps to enhance the air-handling equipment in our building and to acquire the equipment and expertise needed to provide that quality digital experience.

Major outlays of capital were required. Since the beginning of the 21-22 fiscal year, the board, with the recommendation and approval of the finance and staff resources committees, has approved expenditures to enhance the air-handling systems in the church building and to acquire the equipment needed to produce the quality digital experience. We also approved the additional staff position needed to operate the equipment we purchased. These expenses, totaling over \$30,000, are not included in the 21-22 budget as approved by the congregation. They were essential to our goal of resuming worship together, a goal which we will achieve with our limited resumption of in-person worship later this month.

In this time of year those of us blessed with the ability to do so often consider making special gifts. A 2021 year-end gift to UUCGT will be an especially powerful statement of your commitment to and support for the encouraging progress we have made this year. As the year draws to a close, we will all be able to experience our newly settled minister in the pulpit sharing a worship experience, our musicians will be back in the sanctuary and our message will be streaming to our home-based members and a much larger community, in addition to those who are able to be together in the sanctuary.

Let us take this time to replenish our financial resources as we give thanks for our recent achievements and look forward with hope to the upcoming year. Such a blessing it is to be able to do so after the challenges of the past two years. Please take time to breathe deeply, reflect on the magnitude of our achievement and then make a gift that will warm your heart and soul as you experience the chalice being lit in this new era.

Tom Darnton, Treasurer, speaking for the Board and Finance Committee
November 22, 2021



**Unitarian Universalist Congregation
of Grand Traverse**
6726 Center Road
Traverse City, MI 49686-1802

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

the BEACON

PUBLISHED MONTHLY
Volume 58, Issue 12

December 2021

UUCGT Calendar

Office Hours May Change Soon!

New procedures will likely mean the office being open Mon-Thu instead of Tue-Fri. The hours will still be 9AM to 3PM. We will be learning what works as we go, so please call ahead if you can to verify that the office is staffed. For now someone will always be here Tue-Thu no matter what!

December 2021

01	Wed	Staff Meeting (Office Closed)	10:00 AM
01	Wed	Stretch & Strengthen	11:15 AM
01	Wed	Rev. Alex Office Hours	11:15 AM
02	Thu	Rev. Alex Office Hours	11:00 AM
02	Thu	Congregational Care (via e-mail)	1:00 PM
02	Thu	Peacemaker Needle Workers	1:30 PM
02	Thu	Book Club	1:30 PM
		Zoom at https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87559034218	
03	Fri	Rehearsal for Sunday's Service	3:00 PM
05	Sun	Virtual Social Hall	10:00 AM
		https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84509824161? aep_B4R-cwo6g	
05	Sun	Sunday Service 10:30 AM	10:30 AM
06	Mon	Rev. Alex's Sabbath - pls contact only for emerg.'s	
06	Mon	Stretch & Strengthen	11:15 AM
06	Mon	Men's Group	5:30 PM
07	Tue	Community Lunch	10:30 AM
07	Tue	Sunday Services Comm/Coords	1:30 PM
08	Wed	Staff Meeting (Office Closed)	10:00 AM
08	Wed	Stretch & Strengthen	11:15 AM
08	Wed	Rev. Alex Office Hours	11:15 AM
08	Wed	Staff Resources	4:00 PM
08	Wed	Board of Trustees Meeting	7:00PM
		https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81845204927	
09	Thu	Rev. Alex Office Hours	11:00 AM
09	Thu	Peacemaker Needle Workers	1:30 PM
09	Thu	Solstice Group	3:99 PM
09	Thu	Vocal Ensemble	7:00 PM
10	Fri	Sunday Svc Reh (time subject to chg)	1:00 PM

10	Fri	Program Council	3:00 PM
		https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81712714419	
12	Sun	Virtual Social Hall	10:00 AM
12	Sun	Sunday Service	10:30 AM
13	Mon	Rev. Alex's Sabbath	
13	Mon	Stretch & Strengthen	11:15 AM
14	Tue	Community Lunch	10:30 AM
15	Wed	Staff Meeting (Office Closed)	10:00 AM
15	Wed	Rev. Alex Office Hours	11:15 AM
15	Wed	Stretch & Strengthen	11:15 AM
15	Wed	Finance Committee	3:30 PM
16	Thu	Rev. Alex Office Hours	11:00 AM
16	Thu	Congregational Care	1:00 PM
16	Thu	Peacemaker Needle Workers	1:30 PM
16	Thu	Book Club	1:30 PM
16	Thu	Committee on Ministry	5:00 PM
16	Thu	Vocal Ensemble	7:00 PM
17	Fri	Rehearsal for Sunday Service	1:00 PM
19	Sun	Sun Virtual Social Hall	10:00 AM
19	Sun	Sunday Service	10:30 AM
20	Mon	Rev. Alex's Sabbath	
20	Mon	Stretch & Strengthen	11:15 AM
21	Tue	Community Lunch	10:30 AM
21	Tue	Leadership Development	3:00 PM
22	Wed	Staff Meeting (Office Closed)	10:00 AM
22	Wed	Rev. Alex Office Hours	11:15 AM
22	Wed	Stretch & Strengthen	11:15 AM
23	Thu	Rev. Alex Office Hours	12:00PM
23	Thu	Vocal Ensemble (tentative?)	7:00 PM
24	Fri	Christmas Eve Services! At...	4:00 PM
			5:30 PM
			7:00 PM
26	Sun	Virtual Service with the People's Church of Kalamazoo	
		http://peopleschurch.net/ for more information!	

Rev. Alex will likely be on vacation and other Staff may be away from the office as well. Many groups may not be meeting between Christmas and the New Year; please check with your group's chair or leader!