

100 Delights at The Community Church
by Rev. Thom Belote

On February 23, inspired by Ross Gay's The Book of Delights, I preached [The Sermon of Delights](#). The bulk of the sermon contained a list of one hundred delights I find in this church community. Here, in slightly revised form, is that list:

- 1) Entering the Sanctuary for the first time after a new art exhibit has gone up.
- 2) Noticing the native plantings in the courtyard, tended by the Sacred Gardeners.
- 3) The very large and delightfully plump groundhog that waddles up from the canyon on sunny afternoons and hangs out outside the Minister's office.
- 4) The musical offerings of Danny Gotham, and 5) Debbie Davis on the cello, and 6) Dorothy Wright on the cello, and 7) the Bluegrass Battleship, and 8) Lex and Brian, and 9) Luminescence, and 10) Eric Bannan, and 11) Jay miller on the sax, and 12) Richard Edwards on guitar, and 13) Daniel Jones on drums, and 14) Max Kuhlman on drums, and 15) Erich Lieth on piano and many other instruments, and 16) Josh Socolar on piano, 17) and Kristin Trangsrud on piano, and 18) every person who is brave enough to sing a solo!
- 19) Being able to brag to someone from another church, "Yeah, but I bet your church doesn't have its own 16-piece Ukulele ensemble."
- 20) The fact that we host the only Unitarian Universalist campus ministry in the state of North Carolina, and perhaps the most active campus ministry in the country. They are so delightful! (I wish more UU churches would do the work to support this delight.)
- 21) The delight of young person energy in our church. Our church includes young people serving on the Board, 22) the Worship Ministry Team, 23) the Immigrant Justice Team, 24) the Music Ministry, and more.
- 25) Our membership includes three people, that I know of, who are preparing for the Unitarian Universalist ministry: Sara Gush, 26) Sarah Clark-Farnell, and 27) Carter Smith
- 28) And two of those three are children of our church, which says something about our ability to engender delight and inspiration.
- 29) I delight in the Insch Leadership Program that takes seriously the leadership development of high school students. Oh, I have literally bragged to those from other churches, "Our church has a leadership associate program for high school youth."
- 30) I delight at the way our church shows up at the NAACP's MLK service, there were about fifty of us from our church there this year,
- 31) and the way we've shown up for HKonJ,
- 32) and the way we showed up at Moral Mondays.
- 33) I delight in the generosity and openness and openheartedness with which we've welcomed a refugee and an asylum seeker to live in the Manse;
- 34) and in the team planning next month's pilgrimage to Montgomery and Selma.

- 35) I delight in a Share the Plate program that now gives away upwards of FORTY THOUSAND DOLLARS each year. Isn't that amazing?
- 36) Noticing the solar panels fills me with delight.
- 37) Last Sunday I was so delighted by Maureen and Shannon's shiny pink caps that they wore as they festively solicited donations for the food pantry;
- 38) I delight in those who keep showing up for shifts at the soup kitchen.
- 39) I delight in the robustness of our ministry to children;
- 40) and the robustness of our ministry to middle-schoolers;
- 41) and the robustness of our ministry to high-schoolers. Did you know that our programs for children and youth are among the most robust of all Unitarian Universalist churches in the country?
- 41) A one-word delight: Marion.
- 42) I delight in the dedication of our trained Our Whole Lives teachers at the K-1 level,
- 43) the grade 5 level,
- 44) the grade 8 level,
- 46) and high school level. I delight in the seriousness of their calling, and the life-changing impact of this ministry.
- 47) I delight in the vision and organizational skills required to transform this church into Hogwarts on the Hill for a weekend.
- 48-56) I delight in the audacity and vision and organizational skills required to direct, produce, cast, choreograph, costume, light, set-design, orchestrate, and sound-design a full-on musical!
- 57) I delight in the Community Church Choir,
- 58) the Community Singers,
- 59) the brand-new Family Choir,
- 60) and the one word delight we know as Glenn.
- 61) I delight in the way members of the Caring Ministry descend upon the Community Room of the Jones Building and set up tables and make punch and smooth out tablecloths and create hospitality when we gather for a memorial service for one of our members.
- 62) I delight in the kitchen crew during concerts and musicals and performances,
- 63) I delight in the pie and cake and cookies and brownies that seem to appear at all these events as if by magic.
- 64) I delight that we're better at potluck-ing than we seem to believe we are. Seriously.
- 65) I delight in the way a baby's eyes grow large when they are given a rose during a child dedication, and
- 66) in the slightly embarrassed eyes of youth that seem often to be saying, "Please don't look at me," during our Rising Up ceremony for graduating seniors in the spring.

- 67) I delight in the unveiling of quilts. There is magic in that moment when a quilt – created for Habitat for Humanity or for the Auction – is first opened.
- 68) I delight in the knit caps and shawls and blankets created by the knitters and crochet-ers. Their productivity is amazing to behold.
- 69) I delight in Rachel’s warm and welcoming presence. It matters so much!
- 70) I delight that Rachel is even better at remembering names than I am!
- 71) The rituals and traditions we’ve developed for welcoming new members into the church.
- 72) The gifts of joy and enthusiasm that Kat brings to the Assistant Religious Education Director position;
- 73) The gifts and passion and perspective and unflappability that Dana brings to the Congregational Administrator position.
- 74) I delight that we have a team of members who are so deeply committed to principles of dialogue that they’ve taken this passion out beyond the walls of our church, into our community, all over the Triangle, and across the state.
- 75) I delight that we have a team of members who are so deeply committed to our church covenant that they’ve created a new ministry to improve the way our covenant is lived.
- 76) I delight in leaders. This may confirm me as an absolute church nerd – as if there was ever any doubt – but there is something so wonderfully delightful about leaders who take seriously their volunteer commitments, who show up for meetings, who give of their time and talents.
- 77) There is delight in a thoughtful agenda,
- 78) in well-recorded minutes,
- 79) and in the gifts of attention and presence at meetings.
- 80) There is also delight in getting up on ladders,
- 81) Wielding paintbrushes,
- 82) and re-organizing the supply closets or the kitchen.
- 83) There is delight in leaders who show up and leaders who show up with pizzazz, such as when Don and Susan Blanchard wear their tuxedo tee shirts.
- 84) I delight in all the creative and imaginative talents on display in the events and items that are offered during the Fall Auction.
- 85) I delight in the imagination that our Gap Strategy team is bringing to raising the last portion of the necessary funds for our building expansion.
- 86) I delight in sign-ups filling up for rides and meals and visits when someone reaches out for help.
- 87) I delight in the focus that is shared when the chalice is lit;
- 88) the silence that is held;
- 89) the sharing from the heart in Covenant Groups;

90) the practice of active listening;

91) and the exploration of spiritual practices.

92) There is delight in the bustle of activity before an event, that industrious energy, as well as

93) the care of the last volunteer who makes sure everything is reset before locking up.

94) [OMG, I just saw the groundhog is again!]

95) I delight in a memory I have from six years ago, when the Ministerial Search Committee met with me in Brad Kosiba's living room just days following the blizzard that year. (I was reminded of this when it snowed last week.) My memory is of the Search Committee standing in a circle and holding hands while singing Shalom because, being unfamiliar with this practice, I had asked them to demonstrate it. Witnessing the deep reverence with which they sang was a sweet delight.

96) I delight in the blessed memory of members of this community now departed, who live on in memory and legacy.

97) I should also tell you that I delight in Bill and Mary Beth Powell. Don't you?

98) I delight in how the Day of Service was last year and how it is shaping up to be even more amazing this year. It should be illegal for an Annual Pledge Drive to be so much fun.

99) Speaking of Annual Pledge Drives, I am delighted by the generosity of this congregation.

Last year, we were in the second year of our capital campaign and, mindful of the extraordinary generosity of people's extra giving to the building, we promised not pressure people to increase their giving to the operating fund with their annual pledges. Bill and Mary Beth threw a giant Mardi Gras party and more than 200 of our members went out into the community to do service projects. We simply asked people to think about what this church means and its many delights and the power of its impact. We trusted that if everyone pledged, and if everyone gave as generously as they could, that whatever we raised would be enough for us to run the church.

Last year we set a new record. Pledges increased by \$38,000!

This year, we're in the third year of the Capital Campaign, and our Gap Strategy Team is working to raise the extra money needed to bring us across the finish line. This year the message is the same: If everyone in our community pledges, and if everyone in our community pledges as generously as they are able, and in response to the delight they find here, then we will again be able to count it all as joy.

100) I will leave the 100th delight unspoken, for you to notice and name.