

FOCUS

SEPTEMBER 2025

BUILDING BELONGING

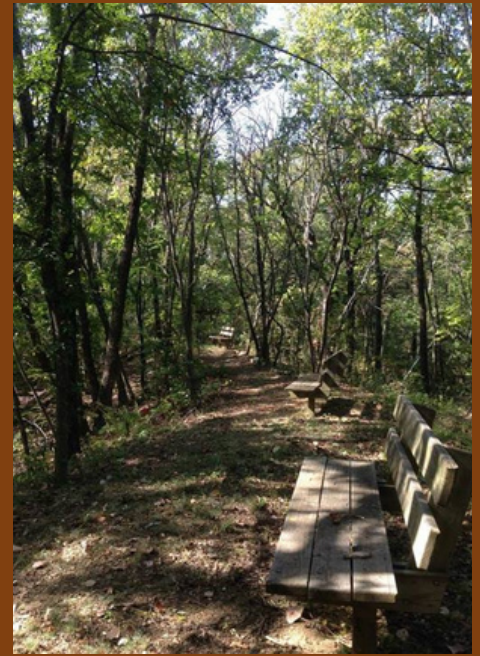
SEPTEMBER AT HOPE

Here at Hope Unitarian Church, September is bursting with ways to connect, learn, and celebrate one another. We begin with Volunteer Appreciation Day & Luncheon on September 7, a heartfelt thank-you to the folks who keep our community thriving—from gardeners and greeters to teachers and team leaders. Come be celebrated, and hear what's ahead for the fall.

On Sunday, September 14, come early for our Programs Fair at 10:00 a.m. Stroll through tables, meet group leaders, and find your next place to plug in—spiritual growth, social justice, music, hospitality, and more. Then we'll gather for our beloved Water Communion Service at 11:00 a.m., honoring the many paths that bring us together. Bring a small bit of water to add to our shared bowl as we kick off the new church year.

Later this month, our Herstory Hour women's group meets 1:30–3:30 p.m. This is a welcoming circle where voices and experiences are honored. Come as you are; no preparation required.

—And don't miss Breakfast on the Hill on September 28 at 9:45 a.m.—a friendly way to start your Sunday with neighbors and friends. Bring your appetite and your curiosity; bring a friend, too. Questions about any of these gatherings? Reach out to the church office, and we'll get you connected. We can't wait to see you this September at Hope!



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BUILDING BELONGING

BY REV JUSTIN M. MCCREARY

While reflecting on the theme for the month, Building Belonging, I first notice something very simple, the theme is not simply belonging, and I believe that is significant. I have moved many times, born in West Virginia, college in Arkansas, seminary in Memphis and then I spent the next few years moving back and forth between north and central Mississippi to finally arrive home in Tulsa, Oklahoma. I was alone during many of those moves, oh I had help but I was coming to a place where I had no friends, no relatives, and no connections. It is within that environment that I understand the difference between belonging and building belonging.

Belonging is passive, it is intrinsic, it is something that happened to me when I was brought home from the hospital a newborn. Even my first friendships with peers were connections I made through my parents. But as I've grown older and moved from the womb of comfortable places, I learned something new. Belonging is no longer passive, it takes work.

I suspect when most people come to visit a church they are looking for somewhere to fit in, to belong. Belonging means that one is accepted and can find comfort in their surroundings. But in these places, it is important to remember that belonging is something that is built, it is not passive, and the onus is not always on the visitor to do the building.

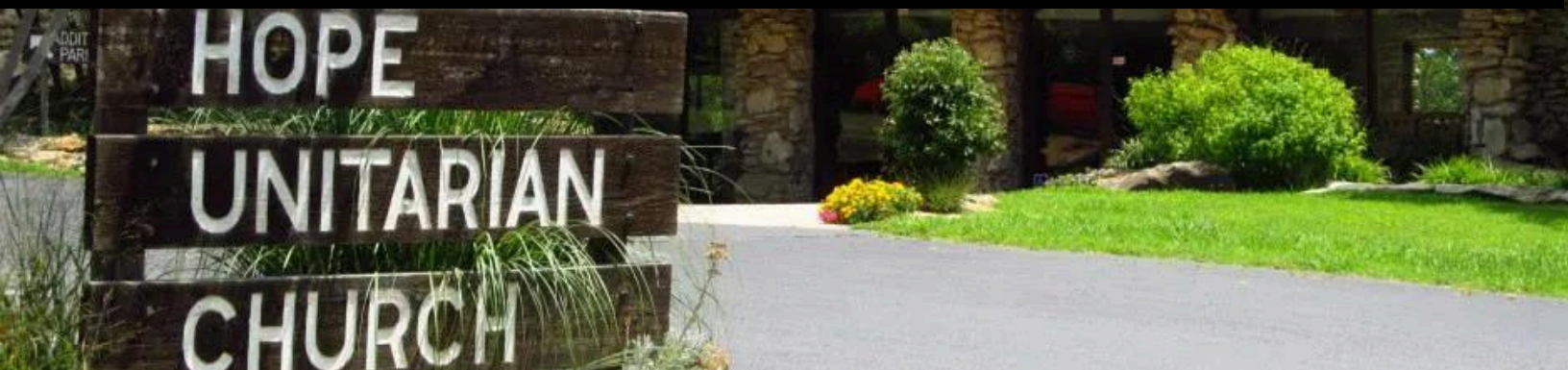
How do we build a place where people belong? A place where someone walks in and thinks, "I can be myself here, I fit in, I can be home." This is the question I leave you with for the month of September, how do we build belonging?



Rev. Justin would love to meet with you to provide pastoral care or just to get to know you!

His usual office hours are Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 AM through 3 PM.

Please email him at revjustin@hopeuu.org to schedule an appointment to meet in person or via Zoom. If your need is urgent, call him at 918-481-0999, x2.



CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY

Dear Members and Friends,

As part of our shared commitment to nurture and grow our beloved community, we invite you to participate in the 2025 Congregational Survey. Your reflections will help us better understand what matters most to you—spiritually, socially, and in congregational life—and guide the Board and Minister in honoring those values in future planning.



Timeline

- Responses accepted until September 17, 2025
- A summary of findings will be shared in the October Focus Newsletter



Confidentiality & Care

- Only the Board of Trustees and the Minister will review responses
- Feedback will be interpreted in aggregate form—with no identifying details shared
- Your reflections will be stored securely and used solely to strengthen congregational life

This is more than a survey—it's a chance to shape the future of Hope Unitarian Church with your insight and heart.



Take the Survey

Thank you for being part of this journey with us.

With gratitude and hope,

The Board of Trustees & Minister

Hope Unitarian Church



SEPTEMBER GENEROSITY RECIPIENT

For more than 30 years, New Hope Oklahoma has served children and caregivers impacted by parental incarceration—always free of charge. What began in 1992 as a single summer camp has grown into year-round programs that give kids hope and support in a state with one of the highest incarceration rates in the nation. With research showing that children of incarcerated parents are far more likely to face incarceration themselves, New Hope works to change the story.

During the school year, New Hope offers after-school programs that focus on social and emotional wellbeing. Using trauma-informed, research-based practices, staff help kids strengthen resilience, decision-making, and

critical-thinking skills while connecting them with consistent peers and mentors. pathways of possibility for youth.

Each summer, New Hope hosts day and sleep-away camps for ages 5-14, filled with activities like swimming, hiking, crafts, science, and field trips. These camps provide safe, joyful spaces for children to build self-confidence and friendships. In addition, a licensed social worker provides case management and resource referrals, while community events—such as the Back to School Bash and holiday celebrations—bring families together. Whether through volunteering, donating, or spreading the word, Oklahomans can help New Hope continue to create change.

DONATE

VOLUNTEER

**BUILDING COMMUNITY
INSPIRING**

hope





A SEASON OF LISTENING, LEARNING, & LOVING ALIKE

NIA DARRINGTON-STOKES, DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

As I look back on my first few months serving as Director of Religious Education here at Hope UU, I'm filled with gratitude. Transitioning into a new role, especially in a new community, can be both exciting and stretching. However, from the very beginning, I've felt embraced by a spirit that is distinctly Unitarian Universalist: the deep belief that we don't have to think alike to love alike.

Coming from a different background, I've found significant meaning in this principle. It's more than just a saying; it's a lived practice at Hope. It shows up in the way we care for one another, in how we welcome our children's big questions, and in how we hold space for many ways of being and believing. That openness has helped me feel at home here, and it reminds me why this work matters.

This season has been one of listening and learning. I've spent time getting to know our children, youth, families, volunteers, and staff, each conversation offering insight into what

makes this community special. I've seen firsthand the energy and care that so many bring to the work that goes into building a strong community, and the curiosity, creativity, and wisdom of our young people have inspired me.

There's been a lot of growth: exploring new ideas, navigating systems, and reflecting on how to serve our families in changing times best. With the support of our CYRE Committee and dedicated volunteers, we've begun planting seeds for a program that is inclusive, justice-centered, and grounded in love.

As we look toward a new church year, I'm excited to keep building together a program where all children and youth feel affirmed, encouraged, and empowered to explore their values, ask big questions, and live into the promise of beloved community.

Thank you for the welcome, the encouragement, and the shared vision. With gratitude and hope -



LEGACY SOCIETY RECOGNITION

On Sunday September 21, 2025, The Hope Unitarian Church Foundation as part of the Sunday service is planning to recognize members and friends who are willing to provide for the Foundation in their estate plans. We will provide each member or friend who wish to be recognized with a Legacy pin signifying your continued support of Hope Unitarian Church and a member of our Legacy Society.

Planned Gifts will assure that we will be able to continue to provide funds that the church has come to rely on as part of our annual church budget.

We are requesting that the members who wish to be recognized as part of our Legacy Society complete the form that was attached in our letter no later than September 15th and email it to foundation@hopeuu.org, or fill out the online version of the form [HERE](#).

Thank you!

Bruce Luria, President





SEPTEMBER EVENTS

● Board and Committee Meetings

All Hope members are welcome to attend the following meetings, which are held at the church unless otherwise indicated:

- Finance Committee: 6:00 PM, Monday, September 15th
- Board of Trustees: 7:00 PM, Tuesday, September 23rd

● Church Events

All are welcome to attend the events listed below. (This is not a complete list of events taking place at the church this month; other events may be private or limited to members of specific church groups.) Dates and times listed below may change! Please check the church's online calendar at www.hopeuu.org/calendar for the most current schedule of events.

Women of Hope: Thursday, September 4th 6 PM

Volunteer Appreciation Day & Luncheon:

Sunday, September 7th

Tuesday, September 9th: Outreach Meeting 6 PM

Sunday, September 14th: Programs Fair & Water Communion

Thursday, September 18th: Game Night

Saturday, September 20th: Feed the Homeless

Thursday, September 25th: Hope Happy Hour

Friday, September 26th, 1:30 PM: HERStory Hour

September 28th, 9:45 AM: Breakfast on the Hill

● Log Cabin Rentals

The following support groups currently rent the Log Cabin on a weekly or monthly basis:

• Tuesdays, 6:30-7:30 PM: SouthSide Recovery/Narcotics Anonymous (SSR/NA)

• Wednesdays, 10:00 AM-noon: Al-Anon

• Wednesdays, 5:45-7:00 PM: Codependents Anonymous (CoDA)

• Usually the 3rd Saturday of each month, 4:00-6:00 PM: Victims' Voices (victim impact panel).

Check their website or www.hopeuu.org/calendar for specific dates.

● Cereal Days

Breakfast cereal (no Cheerios, please!) for the Tulsa Day Center for the Homeless can be dropped off at the church on Sunday morning, or Tuesday thru Friday from 9AM-3PM.

This Month's Cereal Sunday will be on September 14th.



SEPTEMBER EVENTS

Happy Birthday!

September Birthdays

Angela Hart - 2

Nancy Henry - 7

Laura Prather Reiman - 11

David Lynn - 13

Kim Baker Rauh - 13

Robert Billings - 15

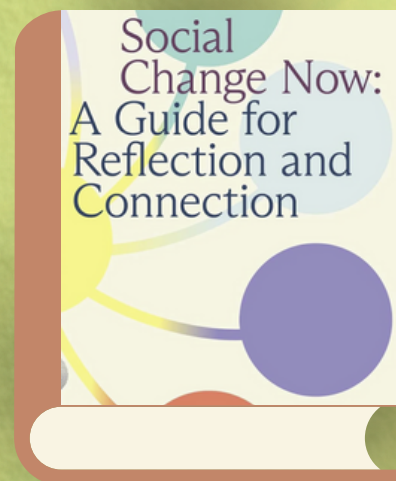
Jacob Hart - 18

Morgen Cavanah - 18

Angelica Anrig - 20

Bruce Luria - 23

Rachel Hay - 28



UU Common Read 2025-2026

When we do a UU Common read together, we share in reflection, learning, and action. This year's common read book is "Social Change Now A Guide for Reflection and Connection" by Deepa Iyer



September Adult Forums

September 7th: Generosity Recipient -
New Hope Tulsa

September 14th: Programs Fair

September 21st: Building Connections

September 28th: Breakfast on the Hill





ABOUT HOPE CHURCH

HOPE'S MINISTER

Rev. Justin M. McCreary

Rev. Justin's usual office hours are Tuesdays-Thursdays, 10 AM-3PM.

Please email him in advance at revjustin@hopeuu.org to schedule an appointment to meet in person or via Zoom.

If your need is urgent, call him. 918-481-0999, x2.

SUNDAYS

Children's Church and Youth: 9:45 AM

Adult Forum: 10:00 a.m.

Sunday Services: 11:00 a.m.

Weekdays

Hope's general office hours are 9:00 AM-3:00 PM Tuesdays through Fridays. If you wish to visit the church in person, please call ahead to check staff availability. (For security reasons, external doors are kept locked unless an event is in progress.) We respond to email and voicemail messages from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM Tuesdays through Fridays.

HOPE'S STAFF

Justin McCreary

Minister

Nia Darrington-Stokes

Director of Religious Education

Morgen Cavanah

Church Administrator

Rachel Hay

Lead Teacher

Elizabeth Obal

Church Accountant

Christy Stalcup

Music Director

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Tulsa, OK 74133

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hopeuu@hopeuu.org

www.hopeuu.org

2025-2026 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Vanessa Self, President

Jeff Dossett, President Elect

David Tracy, Past-President

Rebecca Jones, Vice President of Finance and Planning

Gail Hawk, Vice President of Programs

Christy Chesnut Levine, Secretary

Vacant Position Treasurer

Carol Young, Trustee

Gail Nagengast, Trustee

