

FOCUS DECEMBER 2025



CHOOSING HOPE

DECEMBER AT HOPE

Share Hope With Our Star Tree!

This year, our Star Tree will feature the wish lists of 40 senior adults receiving assistance from Life Senior Services. Many of these seniors live in Vintage Housing, independent living communities for those on limited incomes. There are 18 Vintage Housing communities in the Tulsa area, and often these seniors are living alone.

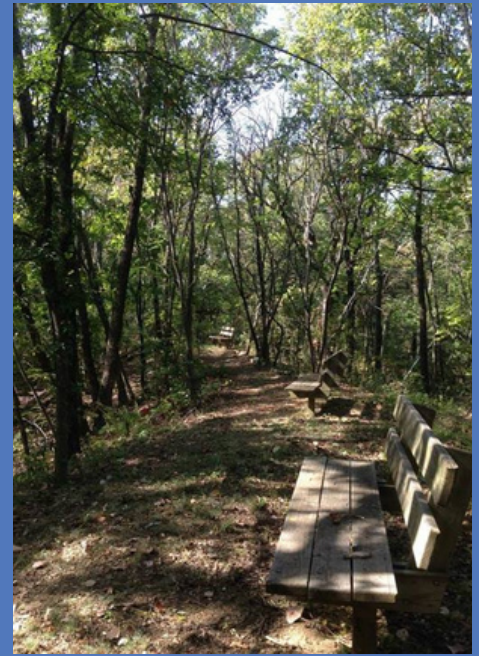
Other seniors are supported through the PACE program, which provides inclusive services for those with chronic health care needs and helps families coordinate care for seniors living at home. The goal of both programs is to help seniors age in place and maintain their independence while staying connected to their community.

How to Participate:

1. Choose a Star or Ornament from the tree.
2. Go shopping and select a gift for the senior.
3. Wrap the gift and attach the Star securely.
4. Return gifts to Hope by Sunday, December 7.

For questions or more information, please call or text Lynn Walters at 918-863-4508.

Let's come together to make this holiday season brighter for our Tulsa senior community!



IN THIS ISSUE

REFLECTIONS FROM
THE MINISTER

GENEROSITY RECIPIENT

HOPE IN PRESENT
TENSE

DECEMBER EVENTS

ABOUT HOPE CHURCH



CHOOSING HOPE

BY REV JUSTIN M. MCCREARY

Our theme this month is Choosing Hope. One of the things I appreciate about the themes from the Soul Matters curriculum is that they don't just load you down with a noun, they give you direction with a verb, see we aren't just reflecting on Hope we are reflecting on Choosing Hope, and those are different things, because it is easy to hope when things are well, the sun is shining, there is a nice cool breeze, and you are surrounded by flowers, but that isn't always the case?

We are looking out into a world that is trending toward authoritarianism, we are becoming more isolated, and it is easy during these times to find ourselves in the cellars of our minds, putting one foot in front of the other just because we are supposed to. However, our theme this month reminds us that we need not despair, because hope is not just a feeling, it is a choice. We can choose to look to the world and instead of giving up say, "How can I help."

I think we are lucky up here on Hope Hill because we are surrounded by nature, because weekly our despair is confronted with the beauty that is around us. We can see the seasons change; when the trees lose their leaves, we know that those leaves will begin to feed the earth below so that in springtime the trees and flowers can wow us with their beauty. On Hope Hill we can take a look at web of creation and choose to see the world through the lens of hope.

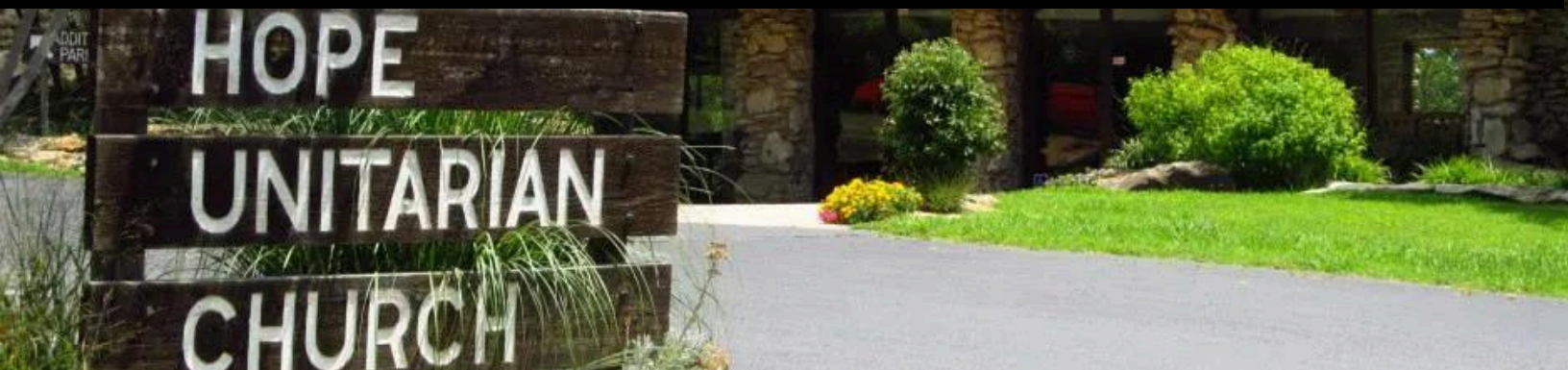
This doesn't mean we are oblivious to shadows, it just means we choose carry the light.



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.



CHOOSING HOPE:

A Guide to Embracing Optimism in Uncertain Times

Understanding the Power and Practice of Hope in Everyday Life—Through a Spiritual and Inclusive Lens

by Nia Darrington-Stokes

Hope is a powerful force that has carried humanity through its greatest challenges, heartbreaks, and seasons of uncertainty. Spiritually, hope is more than an emotion it is a gift, a light within us that refuses to be extinguished. Whether grounded in faith, a deep sense of interconnectedness, ancestral wisdom, or the quiet strength of the human spirit, choosing hope is an intentional act. It is trusting that the Spirit of Love, the Sacred, or the greater unfolding of life is still moving, even when the path ahead is unclear.

In a world often clouded by uncertainty, choosing hope is not a dream. It is a spiritual practice a conscious decision to believe in the possibility of a better tomorrow. Hope invites us to look beyond what is immediately visible and trust in something larger than our present circumstances. For some, that grounding comes from God; for others, it comes from the Divine Mystery, the wisdom of the ancestors, the interdependent web of all existence, or the inner truth that guides us. Whatever its source, hope helps us walk through life with deeper peace, resilience, and purpose.

Choosing hope means looking for light in moments of darkness. It encourages us to focus on possibilities instead of barriers, to believe that transformation is possible, and to meet each day with courage. Hope is not the denial of reality; it is the strength to face reality with grace, clarity, and an open heart. Many spiritual traditions remind us that hope is a companion to faith not only faith in a higher power, but also faith in humanity, in justice, and in the enduring possibility of goodness.

The benefits of hope extend beyond the spiritual realm. Hope strengthens the mind, heart, and body. People who nurture hope often experience greater peace, reduced stress, and deeper emotional well-being. Hope nudges us toward reflection, prayer, meditation, or stillness whatever practices reconnect us to our values and the sacredness of life. Communities rooted in hope become havens of compassion, courage, and mutual care. Hope does not remain inside us; it

radiates outward.

In today's world, maintaining hope can feel difficult. With constant news, global tension, and personal struggles, hope can feel distant. Yet spiritually grounded hope is resilient. It grows through connection through community, shared values, and the comforting knowledge that we do not journey alone. Hope is not permanent; it is practiced. On days when your own hope feels fragile, you can lean on the hope of others. Reach out to community, participate in ritual, share stories, sit in meditation, or let the words of sacred texts or poets strengthen your spirit.

History and the UU tradition offer countless examples of individuals and communities who chose hope in times of adversity. Prophetic voices spoke hope when justice seemed impossible. Civil rights leaders marched with hope long before change arrived. Everyday people rise, rebuild, and continue because something within whispers, "There is more to this story." Hope is not naïve. It is transformative. It is the spiritual current that empowers people to heal, to advocate, to imagine, and to create.

Choosing hope does not mean ignoring hardship or pretending everything is fine. Rather, it is the conscious choice to believe in possibility, to trust in the movement of love, justice, and truth, and to know that even in seasons of waiting, there is purpose. When we choose hope, we illuminate a path not only for ourselves but for those journeying with us. Our hope becomes a beacon one that inspires resilience, compassion, and courage in others.

In a world that often feels heavy, hope reminds us that we are held by something greater be it God, Love, Community, the Ancestors, or the Interdependent Web of Life. Choosing hope is choosing to believe in the resilience of the human spirit and in the promise that new possibilities are always emerging.



A Pocket Full of Hope

DECEMBER GENEROSITY RECIPIENT

A Pocket Full Of Hope® Inc. is a Tulsa-based nonprofit dedicated to giving young people a place where they feel valued, supported, and inspired. For more than seventeen years, the organization has opened its doors to over 5,200 youth, many of whom are navigating the challenging transition from adolescence to adulthood. Built on learner-centered principles, the program creates an environment where young people can belong, express themselves, and develop healthier ways of relating to the world around them. By working closely with families, schools, and community partners, A Pocket Full Of Hope helps the broader community better understand the issues facing youth today and how positive peer culture can transform lives.

At the heart of the organization is the belief that creativity opens doors to change. Through music, theatre, and dance, youth are encouraged to explore challenges, practice conflict resolution, and imagine new possibilities for themselves. This approach comes to life most vividly in the UpBeat After School Theatre program, where drama therapy techniques such as role-playing, improvisation, and visualization give participants a safe, structured space to process real-world experiences. As students engage with social issues relevant to their lives, they often show increased school attendance, improved decision-making, and a greater

willingness to take responsibility for their actions. Planned success builds confidence, strengthens self-image, and nurtures self-control, ultimately helping many young people emerge as leaders within their peer groups.

The impact of A Pocket Full Of Hope is made possible by the dedication of both its staff and community supporters. Under the leadership of founder and Executive Director Dr. Lester Shaw—a singer, songwriter, filmmaker, and educator—the organization blends youth development with an understanding of individual learning styles, creating an atmosphere of acceptance and opportunity. A committed board and a small but passionate core group of supporters help sustain programs year after year, contributing time, resources, and expertise to ensure each young person feels seen and empowered.

Community involvement remains essential to the organization's mission. Volunteers, educators, artists, tutors, and professionals of all backgrounds are invited to share their skills and help expand the reach of this work. Whether offering guidance in academic support, assisting with fundraising, participating in service learning projects, or lending artistic leadership, community members play a vital role in shaping the future of Tulsa's youth. In a world where many young people face isolation or negative influences, A Pocket Full Of Hope provides something simple yet profound: a safe place to grow, create, and carry a pocket full of hope into adulthood.

Donate

Volunteer





HOPE IN PRESENT TENSE

BY ELIZABETH OBAL

I've always wondered at the range of what we term "hope": from the tiniest of hopes (a child's wish for pancakes, a coffee in the morning, a smile from a friend) to the biggest ones (a good night's sleep, a house, a romance that lasts a lifetime). We twine hopes with dreams, with the idea of picturing something concrete, something in the future that's possible.

However, we can hope for the impossible. To hope against hope is holding out for the slimmest chance that something might occur.

I think we downplay how much our actions affect the odds of something happening. I certainly do, but being the change we want to see in the world takes energy. It's easier to be pessimistic and convince ourselves that inaction is just more realistic. If it'll never happen, then why should we even try?

Hope is not an easy thing to hold onto, or find, these days. It requires determination and effort to see the good that might come, or be made manifest through that determination and effort.

Humans are better at holding onto the bad than the good. We take in the negative experiences and keep them close, but the good ones can bounce off of us without our paying attention. It supposedly takes multiple good experiences to counter one bad one. Thus we need to savor the good things in life, pay attention to them, and try to see how we can help them happen again.

I think we need that range of hopes, from the tiniest ones that keep us going throughout the day, to the biggest ones that keep us trying to make the country and the world a better place. "To dream the impossible dream" is how the world comes into being.





DECEMBER EVENTS

● Board and Committee Meetings

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

Board of Trustees Meeting - Tuesday, Dec 16th 7 PM

● 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 Holiday Party - Thursday Dec 4th - 6PM

Hanging of the Greens - Saturday, Dec 6th, 10 AM

Hope Lunch Bunch - Wednesday Dec 17th, 11:30 AM

Feed the Homeless - Saturday, Dec. 20th

Christmas Eve Service - Wednesday, Dec 24th - 6PM

● 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 November 7th.



DECEMBER EVENTS

Happy Birthday!

November Birthdays

Rick Eagleton - 4

Lisa Dunn - 5

Maggie Scott - 9

Susan Swatek - 13

James Heifner - 17

Eric Reiman - 19

Joseph Sheehan - 20

Jacci Hamilton - 22

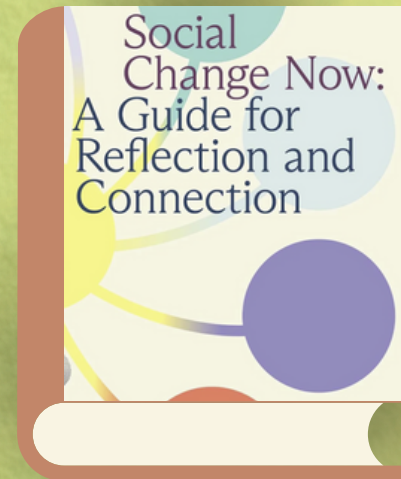
Sherrill Womeldorff - 22

Anita Ward - 22

Brandy Morgan - 22

Sharon Robinson - 28

Mary Newman - 31



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

December Adult Forums

December 7: Generosity Recipient - Pocketful of Hope

December 14: Intergenerational Crafts in Fellowship Hall

December 21: Book Discussion: Erasing History: How Fascists Rewrite the Past to Control the Future by Jason Stanley

December 28: Discussion about the events of 2025





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

CONTACT US

Hope Unitarian Church

8432 South Sheridan Road

Tulsa, OK 74133

Mailing address:

PO Box 35284 Tulsa, OK 74153-0284

918-481-0999

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

