



the Unigram

The Diversity of Islam

Rev. Dr. Joel Tishken, Developmental Minister

As I imagine you can recall, hate crimes, of all kinds, rose dramatically in 2016. Anti-Muslim hate crimes surpassed what they were after 9/11. It seems reasonable to assume a rise in hate crimes will begin again in 2025. Violently acting on your hate is not something that spontaneously happens. That kind of depth and commitment to hating other human beings for some aspect of their identity is something that is nurtured. It requires demonizing and othering people and communities. It requires diminishing others and leveling their complexity down to simple caricatures fueled by fear. It requires being part of communities that normalize it all and reinforce those thoughts and feelings. When the national political atmosphere becomes part of that support system, it takes us where it did in the late 20teens.

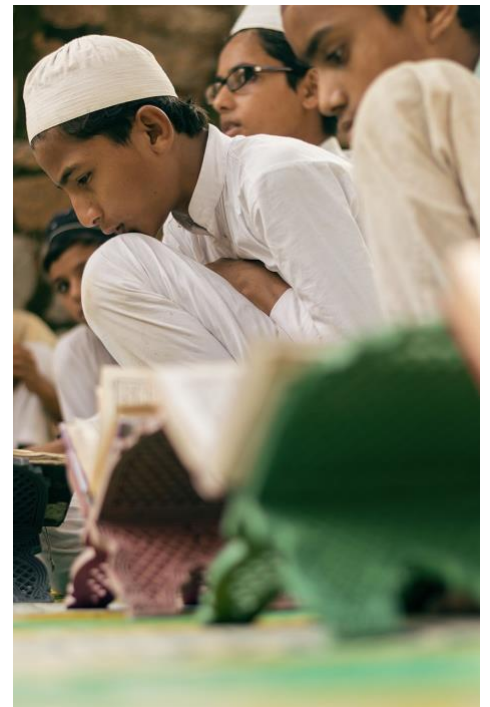
As sad and disgusting as the rise of hate crimes is, I want to offer a message of interfaith hope today. My message is this, each and every one of us can be agents of love, tolerance, and peace that works to nurture and cultivate the opposite of the hate-promoters. Every time we contribute to humanizing, rather than demonizing, other human beings, every time we combat bigotry and ignorance with truth and accurate information, every time we spread messages of welcome and tolerance and grow communities of support, we contribute to “The inherent worth and dignity of every person” and “The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.”

This is my intention today. To discuss the diversity and complexity of the Islamic world. The more we understand Muslims and Islam, the more we become agents of peace and tolerance, starting right here in Muncie. No doubt there is a big range in this room about how much each of us already knows about the Islamic world. But I anticipate we’ll all learn something.

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Sunday Mornings at Our Church in the Woods

Lifespan Religious Education Hour – Sundays at 9:30 am

Join us for our Lifespan Religious Education Hour, every Sunday at 9:30. We have three weekly offerings: Religious Education for Children & Youth, Adult Discussion Group, and Friends & Fellowship.

We will also have additional groups and special offerings.

Religious Education for Children & Youth – Yellow / Blue classrooms

Youth RE will take place in the Yellow classroom during the LRE Hour at 9:30. Adult RE programming will also be available, but a child's grownups are always welcome to attend class with their children! When Youth RE is over, the group will move to the Blue classroom for snacks and fellowship while they wait for their grownups to pick them up.

During the 10:45 service, children are welcome to be in the Sanctuary with their grownups and church community. Families are invited to sit wherever they are comfortable. We have an area designed for young families with pillows, books, a variety of manipulatives, and a tent at the back of the sanctuary near the tables. The nursery is available for infants and toddlers from 9:30 am until noon, and the Blue classroom will remain open and staffed until coffee hour for children who may need to take a wiggle break during the service.

For more information about our Religious Education Program, please contact our Director of Lifespan Religious Education, Jesse Daniel, jesse@uuchurchmuncie.org.

Adult Discussion Group – Red classroom and via Zoom

This group is a chance for people with various personal beliefs to get together and openly discuss a variety of topics.

You'll find weekly topics in the eBlast each Friday. Zoom check-in at 9:15, discussion at 9:30 am

<https://zoom.us/j/4326211304> Passcode: UUcm#1859 (case sensitive)

Friends & Fellowship – Sanctuary

Sip some fresh, hot coffee and share in some conversation with friends, new and old, in the Sanctuary. Work through a puzzle together, catch up about the week, or enjoy getting to know someone new each Sunday at 9:30 am.

Sunday Service – Sanctuary and via Zoom

Multi-Platform Worship 10:45 am Online Service: <https://bit.ly/UUCMSundayService>

February's Dedicated Offering recipient is MLK Dream Team. The offering will be collected February 16th & 23rd. March's recipient is Patchwork Indy and will be collected on the 2nd & 9th. Check out the Friday eBlast for information about each month's Dedicated Offering.

February 2 – “Radical Hope” Sarah Vitale

February 9 – “Gross National Happiness” Stewardship Sunday Rev. Dr. Joel Tishken

February 16 – “My Faith in Love Is Still Devout” Ryan Sibray

February 23 – Richard McKinney

March 2 – “Patchwork Indy” Najia Sherzod Hoshman

March 9 – “Developmental Goal #2” Rev. Dr. Joel Tishken

March 16 – Rabbi Edie Yakutis

March 23 – “Theodore Parker” Rev. Dr. Joel Tishken

March 30 – Rev. Dr. Julia Corbett-Hemeyer

[Please note that topics are subject to change. Be sure to check the Friday eBlast for more detailed information about the upcoming Sunday service.]

What's Happening in Lifespan Religious Education (LRE)?

Jesse Daniel, Director of Lifespan Religious Education



Winter has always been a time when the darkness seems omnipresent for me, and this winter is certainly not an exception. The difference this year is that I have made finding the light, literal and figurative, a priority for me. Sojourner Truth's quote "I will not allow the light of my life to be determined by the darkness around me" has become a mantra, stuck on Post-It notes on mirrors, written in the Notes app on my phone, repeated in my mind as I try to stop myself from falling down another doom-scrolling rabbit hole of political updates.

Post-election, the idea of finding joy as an act of resistance has helped, too. It isn't easy and is definitely not fool-proof, but there is a tangible difference in my mood and patience when I make the effort to focus on the light and the joy of each day. I'm not burying my head in the sand, ostrich style, but instead looking for a counter-balance to help lift the weight of what often feels unbelievably heavy. Our church community is one of the most reliable ways I nurture the light in this darkness, so I'd like to show some gratitude for the people and things that have brought me joy recently.

- We have heat! An enormous thank-you to **Bruce Craig** for the tireless work that went into getting us back up and running.
- We have welcomed several new families, as well as new additions to already beloved UUCM families.
- We have a fantastic reading list for our UUCM Book Club this year- check out the updated bulletin board in the Sanctuary for the full list and take a bookmark while you're there.
- We were awarded a \$500 grant to start programming specifically for our young and emerging adults, which will allow us to better support our growing congregation.

~Jesse

The UUCM Pledge Drive



The church pledge drive is taking place now and leads up to Stewardship Sunday on February 9, with a thank you soup lunch following the service. Look for sign-up sheets in the sanctuary for those who wish to bring food for the lunch. Our pledge drive theme comes from Bhutan and their concept of the value of Gross National Happiness (GNH). They measure their GNH as we measure our Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Bhutan is also the home of the Yeti or Bigfoot, who may make an appearance at our church on Stewardship Sunday. Our graphic for this year's pledge drive is the flag of Bhutan. Our slogan derives from the meaning of Bhutan's GNH or taski delek: May our values multiply in this space and beyond.

We hope you've had a chance to read the pledge letter that arrived in your mailbox and reflect on why you want our church to flourish. Perhaps it's because as UUs, we have always chosen a different path, seeking to create a better, kinder and more inclusive world. Perhaps it's because we seek to follow our values, prioritizing people and the planet over wealth. Perhaps it's because through our community, we encourage each other to be our best selves and to make a difference in the world around us. Whatever your reasons, remember that your pledge makes it possible for our values to multiply in this space and beyond.

You can mail back your pledge form anytime between now and February 9 or bring it with you to church on February 9. [You can also make your pledge online at the UUCM website](#). Go to the Members dropdown link and click on Forms and Information. Once there, click on Pledging Information, then the 2025-26 Online Pledge Form.

Questions? Contact a member of the Stewardship Committee

Holly Hanauer, Chairperson, hbhanauer@aol.com

Sue Errington, errington@comcast.net

Jennifer Hollems, jhollems@yahoo.com

Rev. Joel, joel@uuchurchmuncie.org

Phone numbers are in the membership directory if you prefer to call.

A UUCM Pledge Drive Primer *for visitors and new friends*

- UU congregations are entirely self-funded. We conduct a pledge drive every year as part of the budgeting process.
- Pledging is one of the responsibilities of membership at UUCM. All members and long-time friends receive a pledge form in the mail in late January.
- A pledge is a statement of intention to give a certain amount over the course of a year (our fiscal year is July 1 - June 30.) It can be paid monthly, weekly, quarterly - whatever works for you.
- We are grateful for every gift; there is no minimum requirement. We respect each person's decision in pledging an amount that fits their budget and reflects the role of UUCM in their life.
- Giving - whether by time, talent, or treasure - is an expression of love for our community. It is a means by which we convey and solidify our relationship and membership with UUCM.
- February 9 is Stewardship Sunday, dedicated to the pledge drive and celebrating our commitment to this UU congregation. *Yes, we'll talk about money in church – and we'll have fun!*

If you're visiting or a newer friend, please come to this service, and stay for lunch! We're so happy to have you. We don't expect you to pledge (but you can if you wish!)

Beyond the Pledge Drive: Planned Giving at UUCM

I have a terrible memory, and one thing I've never been able to keep straight is which UUCM endowment fund is which, and how they are to be used. Like, what's the difference between the Crosley and the Ball Fund, because they were both given by Ed Ball, right? And what happens when people give money to a family at a memorial service – where does that money go? And what is this “Templar” fund? Is that sort of like the Freemasons, or what??

I became aware that a lot of our members share my confusion, and there was a need for a detailed list, readily available to all. You might have heard me speak about this at the October congregational meeting. That document is now in print and can be found on the table outside the church office, and at [this link](#).

Also available on that table is the “[UUCM Declaration of Planned Gift Intent](#).” We encourage you to consider leaving a gift to the church in your will, and if you have made such a plan, you can let the church know by using this form. You could designate how you would like your gift to be used; maybe you want to add to an existing fund, or you have another purpose in mind. You could have a conversation with board members or our minister to understand what our future needs might be, and the list of our current endowments may help you make these decisions.

Nearly 80% of our annual pledges come from 30% of our members. In these uncertain economic times, there are concerns about how we will meet our budget needs when we lose some of these large donors. Should we add to our unrestricted funds so they can be used to supplement our pledges? Can we do more to grow our membership? These questions don't have easy answers, but we need to be thinking and talking about it. And be sure to attend the service on March 9, when Rev. Joel and DLRE Jesse will address our second development goal to revitalize our membership, volunteerism, and lifespan RE.

~*Holly Hanauer*

Sharing Gratitude



If you have a note of gratitude you'd like to share in the next Unigram, please send it to uucm@uuchurchmuncie.org, subject line "Sharing Gratitude."

Our sincere gratitude to **Bruce Craig** for all the hours he spent at UUCM with repair crews getting our sanctuary boiler running again. Not only was it a significant investment of time, he did it inside a cold building in some awful temperatures. Thank you, Bruce!

Thank you to **Ric Dwenger** for all the time he invested in buying, installing, and upgrading our sights and sounds inside the sanctuary. We appreciate you, Ric, for this, and all the time you spend doing Sights & Sounds in service.

The Diversity of Islam

Rev. Joel Tishken (continued from page 1)

Here is where I'm going with this [[see map](#)]. Imagine a vertical line between Iran and Pakistan. Three times more Muslims live east of that line, in Central Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia than in all of Western Asia and North Africa. The first group is around one billion, while the second group is just over 300,000 million. Africa south of the Sahara has 250,000 million Muslims. That means that 1 out of 4 Africans living outside of North Africa are Muslim. Here are the ten biggest Muslim populations in the world by nation:

- Indonesia – 242M
- Pakistan – 233M
- India – 200M
- Bangladesh – 180M
- Nigeria – 95M
- Egypt – 90M
- Iran – 82M
- Turkey – 80M
- Algeria – 44M
- Sudan – 39M

To return to the issue of Muslim=Arab, there are roughly 300 million Muslims in West and Southwest Asia. The most populous country in the region is Egypt with 95 million people, and Egypt is mostly Arab. The next two largest countries, Iran and Turkey, both with 80-some million people, are not Arab. Iran is majority Persian, and Turkey majority Turkish. Persian and Turkish are entirely distinct languages and identities and are definitely not Arab. Like most anywhere, there are minority peoples throughout the region including Kurds, Berbers, Luris, Azeris, Armenians, Assyrians, Samaritans, and others, all of whom are not Arab. The prosperity of the Persian Gulf states brings in immigrants from many places. This means that when we add up Persian, Turkish, Kurdish, and all the other minorities and immigrants together, half of the Muslims in West Asia are not Arab.

It might be tempting to imagine that the countries of Western Asia are the most Muslim by their overall percentage. There too, we might be in for a surprise. Here are the top ten most Muslim nations by percentage:

- Maldives, 100%

- Mauritania, 99.9%
- Somalia, 99.8%
- Afghanistan, 99.7%
- Iran, 99.4%
- Western Sahara, 99.4%
- Algeria, 99%
- Morocco, 99%
- Comoros, 98%
- Niger, 98%

Of those 10, only Iran is in Western Asia. Some of the countries of Western Asia have a very high percentage, 95% or higher, of their population Muslim. In addition to Iran, that is also true of Yemen, Palestine, and Jordan. But the same is also true for Mali, Azerbaijan, Djibouti, Tajikistan, and a handful of others. All the ones I just named have a higher percentage of their population Muslim than does Turkey, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Lebanon, Egypt, and Syria, among others. About 6% of people living in Western Asia are part of religions other than Islam.

What is our takeaway on the “who and the where” of Islam? Fifty countries in the world have Islam as the majority religion, from Western Africa through Southeast Asia. Far more Muslims live in South and Southeast Asia than anywhere else, meaning that the vast majority of Muslims are not Arab. Less than 10% of the world’s Muslims are from the Arab world. Which countries are the most Muslim in terms of their overall percentage can be found throughout all parts of the Islamic world.

How else is Islam diverse beyond the who and the where? I’m going to answer that question with two similar jokes. The first joke is that “Wherever three UUs gather, there will be at least six opinions.” The second I found online and apparently comes from people of Dutch descent in this country poking fun at themselves. “Find one Dutchman, you have a theologian. Find two Dutchmen, you have a church. Find three Dutchmen, you have a schism.”

Both jokes appreciate that UUism and Dutch Reform both have a common core and a common set of values that bring them together. And yet at the same time, there are all sorts of ways both churches are diverse and have a range of opinions. It’s easy for us to appreciate that in UUism, because we’re in it. Among Protestants, theological diversity will often manifest, like in the joke, with schisms and the creation of more denominations and flavors of churches. But it is also true of any religious organization anywhere, even when they remain in one piece. Let’s take the Catholic Church, for instance. There are Catholics who: think the Papacy has far too much power and should be done away with, support ordaining women, are open and affirming, support abortion rights, support priests marrying, and so on. There are tensions within the church over diversity and representation. There are as many Catholics in the Congo as there are in Italy. And yet the last time I checked, Italy had eighty cardinals and Congo had two. Hmm, I wonder why. From the outside it might look like the Catholic Church is unified, because it’s one church, but there is plenty of internal diversity. The world’s 1.2 billion Catholics don’t share a single brain and there are plenty of ways that Catholics differ and disagree with other Catholics and with the church itself.

That diversity and plurality is no less true in Islam than in UUism or Protestantism or Catholicism. Many of the things that make Protestants, Catholics, and Christians different from one another, have parallels within Islam. Let me give you several examples.

First, let’s deal with religious diversity. Islam has plenty of sub-groups, or denominations, who differ on matters of leadership, beliefs, and practices. There are currently three large denominations: Sunni, which is about 90% of Muslims, Shi’a, about 10%, and Ibadi, less than 1%. Those differences initially began over leadership and who the proper

leaders after Muhammad were. Over time other differences in how they practice Islam have emerged. There are also many subdivisions within Shi'a concerning differing genealogical lines of leaders. Islam has a form of mysticism called Sufism. Sufis organize themselves into different schools based of different mystical techniques. In some places, like West Africa, Sunni or Shi'a doesn't matter to people very much, but which Sufi brotherhood you belong to does.

There are also forms of Islam that don't fit any of those categories. Some forms of Islam are so outside the norms that the majority doesn't consider them to be Islam. For instance, the Nation of Islam believes that Allah takes human form as a black man, currently Louis Farrakhan. Most mainstream Muslims would say, not only is that outside the typical norms of Islam, it's against them because Allah is not and never will be human. The Nation of Islam splintered and created multiple subgroups when some of them went mainstream and others didn't. You get the idea. Islam's religious and theological diversity is just as rich as in other religions.

Second, Islam is diverse by all the other markers of identity that matter to human communities. Just because some peoples, or groups, or nations belong to the same religion doesn't mean they stop having other identities that matter to them. Languages, ethnic and cultural identities, histories, colonial legacies, economic and national interests, foreign relations, and so on, are all still at work on human communities, even when they share a religion. The Islamic world is just as prone to cooperation or conflict as any other group of humans or region of the world. 25% of the people on our planet identify as Muslim. That's 1.9 billion. There isn't much that 1.9 billion people are going to agree upon. And that even includes what Islam is. The Islamic world is every bit as complex as the

Catholic world, Western world, Asia, or any other part of our planet that involves billions of people.

Why does all of this matter? As UUs, we very much appreciate when people understand what makes us different from others groups that call themselves a church or religion. When I tell people I grew up in Wisconsin, I appreciate when they don't assume that means I love heavy metal, drive a Harley, and have a diet consisting of cheese, brats, and beer. We all appreciate when we're not treated like a stereotype, or have people treat us all alike based on the one thing they know about a group. So do Muslims, like any group of people. The more we appreciate what makes Islam and Muslims diverse, the more three-dimensional, the fuller, the more human they become. Treating Islam like one giant monolith serves the interests of Islamophobes and hate mongers. It's stereotypes and simple understandings of Islam that promote the idea that 1.9 billion people=al-Queda or Taliban—they're all the same violent anti-Western terrorists. That sort of narrative, that squishes down complexity until everyone is a one-dimensional caricature is what feeds hypernationalism, revenge narratives, xenophobia, and ultimately hate crimes. Osama bin laden is not a typical Muslim any more than Eric Rudolph, the Atlanta Olympics bomber, is a typical Christian.

We have the power to challenge one-dimensional images of Islam and replace them with three-dimensional ones. Doing so advances interreligious understanding, tolerance, and peace. It honors "The inherent worth and dignity of every person" and does our part to contribute to "The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all." May peace be upon us all.

Adapted from message delivered January 19, 2025
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February / March 2025 UUCM Calendar

Online calendar: <http://www.uuchurchmuncie.org/members/calendar/>

Regular Weekly Events

Adult Discussion Group: Multi-Platform	Sundays	9:30 am
LRE Classes & Activities	Sundays	9:30 – 10:30 am
Worship Service: Multi-Platform	Sundays	10:45 am
Social Hour	Sundays	After the service
Choir Rehearsal	Tuesdays	7:30 pm

February / March Meetings & Events

Worship Associates	Wednesday	Feb 5	7:00 pm
Progressive Valentine's Party	Thursday	Feb 6	7:00 pm
Parents Time Out	Saturday	Feb 8	1:00 – 3:00 pm
Sunday Office Hours	Sunday	Feb 9	9:30 am
Choir Rehearsal	Sunday	Feb 9	10:00 am
Social Justice Committee	Monday	Feb 10	7:30 pm
Staff Meeting	Tuesday	Feb 11	2:00 pm
Din with the Min	Wednesday	Feb 12	5:15 pm
Board of Trustees	Wednesday	Feb 12	7:00 pm
Book Club	Thursday	Feb 13	7:00 pm
Pastoral Associates	Sunday	Feb 23	12:30 pm
Staff Meeting	Tuesday	Mar 4	2:00 pm
Worship Associates	Wednesday	Mar 5	7:00 pm
Parents Time Out	Saturday	Mar 8	9:30 – 11:30 am
Pokagon Fundraiser Brunch	Sunday	Mar 9	12:00 pm
Social Justice Committee	Monday	Mar 10	7:30 pm
Din with the Min	Wednesday	Mar 12	5:15 pm
Board of Trustees	Wednesday	Mar 12	7:00 pm
UU Book Club	Thursday	Mar 13	7:00 pm
Staff Meeting	Tuesday	Mar 18	2:00 pm
Pastoral Associates	Sunday	Mar 23	12:30 pm
Unigram Submissions Due	Wednesday	Mar 26	9:00 am

UUCM Office Hours

Monday

1:00 – 4:00 pm

Tuesday – Friday

9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Sunday Office Hours

Our next Sunday office hours will be February 9, 9:30 am – 12:30 pm.

Rev. Joel's Office Hours

Tuesdays 9:00 – 3:30

Phone and zoom meetings available at other times by request.

Jesse's Office Hours

Tuesdays 10:00 – 3:00

Items for the eBlast are due by 9:00 am each Thursday.

Please use the [Publicity Form](#) to submit your announcements.

Articles for the April / May *Unigram* are due Wednesday, March 26.

Please send as attached Word or Google docs to uucm@uuchurchmuncie.org

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