

## In The Middle: Embracing Our Place

A recent editorial on National Public Radio discussed the ethics of place, the slow disappearance of stately public spaces and the increasing presence of palatial private dwellings. Post offices, city halls, and places of worship once assured all sorts of people equal access to high ceilinged, old world and artistic elegance. A lack of money and commitment to these civic domains has seen courtly, public spaces neglected or replaced by more cost effective, functional structures. The communal dignity and worth evoked by public elegance has been decreasing, while a more exclusive display of wealth, conveyed by private opulence, has been increasing. From gated communities to gentrified ethnic neighborhoods, the phenomenon of economic separatism, discrimination, and elitism in our communities is visible.

The U.U. Fellowship of Wilmington is privileged to have a place. We are blessed to worship in our own home, nestled in the “woods”. With that ownership comes the responsibility to an ethic of place. It is the charge of membership in the Fellowship to be an honorable steward of this public space. Not out of selfish preoccupation or arrogant indulgence but out of civic awareness that we can preserve and promote our values through our place. Sincere and humble gratitude for this place, knowing our place, figuratively and literally, is a responsibility of ownership and membership. It is best demonstrated by our commitment to preserving our buildings, keeping them clean, environmentally friendly, and respecting their use. It is acknowledging that there is often too little space for the needs of the whole community by leaving rooms the same, if not better than we find them. Sharing space respectfully is important. Accessibility and the aesthetic pleasure of paint and landscaping are as vital as nuts and bolts of administration in a community of faith. Embracing our place, we make sure that there is always room for the new person, the young person, the elder person or the differently abled person. We embrace one another as we embrace our place. To best serve our community, we need to continually expand our understanding of an ethic of place. As advocates of economic justice and as the keepers of this facility representing the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Wilmington we are called to be the best we can be.

This year's every member stewardship campaign is all about embracing our place as Unitarian Universalists, embracing the place of the U.U. Fellowship of Wilmington as a liberal religious voice in the Wilmington area for over 40 years. Celebrate this year's campaign by embracing your place, our place, in history, in the world, in our community, in our hearts, in this moment, anticipating the future with appreciation.