

Unitarian Universalist Society of Martha's Vineyard

January 11, 2026

"The Bottom is Not the End; It's Where We Begin"

with

Michael Blanchard

"Be kinder than necessary, for everyone you meet is fighting some kind of battle."

--T.H. Thompson

Ringing the Bell

Welcome Jan Pogue

Prelude Sam Rothberg

Chalice Lighting Marquetta Drakes

Reflection Jan Pogue

Candles of Joy and Concern Marquetta Drakes

Hymn #1021 "Lean on Me" (teal hymnal, all verses)

Reading from Wendell Berry Jan Pogue

Offering

Offertory

Reading from Langston Hughes Marquetta Drakes

Introduction

Homily "The Bottom is Not the End; It's Where We Begin" Michael Blanchard

Hymn #205 "Amazing Grace" (verses 1 and 3)

Benediction Michael Blanchard

Postlude Sam Rothberg

Michael Blanchard is a photographer, writer, and gallery owner on Martha's Vineyard whose work is rooted in recovery, hope, and the healing power of art. After getting sober in 2010, he discovered photography not as a career plan, but through an unexpected moment of inspiration that changed the direction of his life — a reminder that sometimes the most important paths begin when we listen.

Photography became a lifeline — a way to reconnect with beauty, community, and spirit. That journey led him to publish two books, *Through a Sober Lens* and *Fighting for My Life*, both honored with Ben Franklin Awards for inspirational writing and photography. His recovery story has resonated widely, earning endorsements from Jamie Lee Curtis and Lance Bass, and his Crossroads Gallery was named Best Gallery on Martha's Vineyard in 2019. His work has been featured in *Vineyard Style*, *Cape Cod Life*, *Photography Today*, and other publications, and *Recovery Today Magazine* once called him "the Ansel Adams of Recovery Photography."

Michael has raised more than \$50,000 for island nonprofits through his annual calendars and regularly donates his time and work to support addiction recovery and mental health programs. Through speaking, writing, workshops, and simple conversations with strangers who walk into the gallery in tears, he shares a message that beauty can save us, community holds us up, and no one is beyond hope.

Thank you to Men's Alliance for service support, flowers and refreshments for today's service.

Pastoral Coverage and Care

Rev. Vicki Hanjian will provide pastoral care. She can be reached at 508-696-8225 or av.hanjian@verizon.net

Need Someone to Listen?

In addition to pastoral care being available from Rev. Vicki, your Lay Ministers are available to lend support to anyone in our USMV community in their time of need by being available to listen and offer comfort. You can reach them individually by calling: Jan Casey (508-942-3643), Bill Bridwell (774-563-8542), Kevin Longval (781-249-4712) or reach out to uu.society.mv@gmail.com

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