



# CommUnity Matters

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest Michigan December 2019

## **December Services**

Services and Children's Religious  
Education Classes begin at 10:00 AM.  
Nursery Care is available.



Please visit our UCC website at [ucommunitychurch.org](http://ucommunitychurch.org) where you can find up-to-date information. You can also [sign up for our Friday emails](#), which will include updated service and event information.

### **Sunday, December 1 - "Social Justice Sunday" with Miriam Epskamp, DRE**

Unitarian Universalism is often described as having deeds, not creeds. On this multigenerational Social Justice Sunday, coordinated by the kids in our Religious Education program, we will 'walk our talk' by rolling up our sleeves and putting our faith in action to benefit [Ministry with Community](#), a local service organization that strives to improve lives by providing food, daytime shelter, and other services to people in our community struggling with housing insecurity, poverty, and mental illness.

### **Sunday, December 8- "The Truth Sets You Free" with Rev. Gy**

For those who are invisible in our society, reclaiming their truth and keeping hope alive can be a constant struggle. Rev. Gy will share stories of resilience and survival from those who are sometimes overlooked.

### **Sunday, December 15- "Homecoming" with Rev. Gy**

The Latin root of Advent means 'coming.' In the midst of the Advent season, Rev. Gy will speak about what it means to come home to yourself and to recognize and nurture your True Self.

### **Sunday, December 22 - "Act of Loving through Giving" with Mary Roscoe**

Mother Theresa said, "It's not how much we give, but how much love we put into giving." Through music, story, and conversation, UCC member Mary Roscoe will help us explore how giving is an act of love.

### **Tuesday, December 24 - "Christmas Eve" with Rev. Rachel Lonberg and Rev. Gy**

Our annual collaborative Christmas Eve candlelight service will take place at People's Church this year. See [page 3](#) for more information.

### **Sunday, December 29 - "The Burning Bowl" with Rev Gy.**

At the dusk of the old year, we are going to release all those emotional ties and bonds that no longer serve us. We will give them over to the flames and like the phoenix bird, from the ashes, we will emerge anew. To learn more about our annual Burning Bowl Ceremony see [page 3](#).

# FROM THE MINISTER

## From the Minister

[Rev. Gy Ludvig Mc-Cartney](#)

From extraordinary to ordinary.

Yes, you read it right. No, it is not a typo.

At least in the Western hemisphere, we have developed a culture of constant striving for excellence, exceeding expectations, ever-increasing performance.

As a result, we've created a level of comfort unknown to previous generations, accumulated immense knowledge of the world around us, learned to cure diseases that in the not so distant past would have wiped out generations, created architecture that reaches far into the high skies, and the list goes on.

There is, however, a dark side to this story. The spirit of constant competition keeps our stress levels high, the need to prove ourselves drives anxiety through the rooftop. We are consumed with ever higher performing, and in fact perfectionism, and over achievement. Being extraordinary is praised and rewarded in our culture.

I believe that we are hard-wired for wanting more. Always more. If today we'd become rulers of our planet, tomorrow we'd be eyeing the universe...

I once knew a person who constantly, perpetually remodeled her house. She would finish one project and the next moment she'd start a new one. I used to wait for her to stop and take in the transformation, enjoy the fruit of her hard work and it never happened. She wanted more, always more and it came at a price.

Life is made up of countless ordinary moments. Countless ordinary encounters. A smile, a kind word, a compliment, a nice cuppa coffee, a warm blanket, an unearned act of generosity, the scent of a flower, the kindness of a stranger, the unconditional love of a dog, and so on and so on.

It is my hope and wish that as the earth is falling into its winter slumber, we, too, slow down to notice. Notice and appreciate. Even be grateful. Why not? Research shows that the practice of gratitude extends one's life expectancy and creates happiness. Who can't use a little more happiness?

Yes, there will still be wars. Yes, the atmosphere is still warming. Yes, there is a lot of violence. Yes, injustice is all around us. If our happiness depends on all of these conditions to go away first, we might have to wait a while.

Join me, if you like, in enjoying being ordinary, in noticing, appreciating and being grateful for the small stuff. Join me, if you like in practicing gratitude daily.

In the words of Pema Chodron: "Rejoicing in ordinary things is not sentimental or trite. It actually takes guts. Each time we drop our complaints and allow everyday good fortune to inspire us, we enter the warrior's world."

Here's to being ordinary!



# CARING COMMUNITY



## DECEMBER CARING COMMUNITY NEWS

*In this holiday season, throughout the year to come, and always in our lives, may we know we are loved; may we share the love we have; and may we be the love we wish to see!*  
~David Breeden

This month of many celebrations includes Happy Birthdays to Matthew Nelson; Tami Brozovich; Nancy Calme; Mary Roscoe; Steve Tasko and Marcus Ragains. Happy Day to each of these special UU friends.

UU's are on the move in Kalamazoo and over the USA. We have had reports that Marsha Laya is finding her stay in Florida filled with lots of physical activity – golf, cycling—but often the high temperature makes it difficult to finish the outing. Is this a problem anyone would enjoy having?

Stephanie Grathwol will be traveling to see her brother in Portland, Oregon during holiday time. One of her sisters and family, and her son and wife will join in the celebration!! Wishes for safe travel for Stephanie and family.

In Kalamazoo, Judy Millsbaugh has moved to the Candlewyck Apartment complex and she reports there are still boxes to empty. “Could all these boxes really belong to me?”, she is asking.

Judy Oliver will be taking a short trip to Chicago to be with her son and family during a week in December. She is hoping to attend some music (jazz) performances while in the big city.

On the health side of members and friends – we were frightened by Betty Lee's absence from church and board meeting and it began a “Where's Betty Lee?” search. She was discovered to be at home after a short stay in ER and, because of being dehydrated she needed to rest and “pump the fluids”. So glad to report she is doing well and will be having at home PT.

Lauren Ritter also had a hospital stay because of being dehydrated and a flare up of diabetes. She is doing well now and will be attending UUCC soon. We missed her and her Sunday Services help.

On December 10th, Beverly Folz will be having eye surgery in Grand Rapids. Lots of wishes for excellent results go out to Bev. Cards or emails would be ways in which to send your wishes to Bev.

It has been reported that Jon Vanderberg, a former member of UUCC, is in failing health at this home in Boston, Mass. He has been missed at UUCC since he moved to be close to his daughter and family about three years ago. We collected many cards of care from UUCC members and sent them to Jon. If there is an update, we will send a notice to all members and friends of UUCC.

Nancy Crowell will still be using her right arm with a low range of motion because her shoulder replacement surgery, scheduled for November 21st, was canceled. She will be doing PT to keep up strength. Another surgery date is anticipated in 2020.

May we all learn to be gracious, both in the giving and receiving of care when needs arise. If you have a need or are aware of a need, please contact one of the point person: Nancy Crowell, Judy Pigg-Behrendt or Judy Oliver.

Enjoy this season of Generosity, Gratitude, and Love.





# INSPIRED SPIRITUALITY

On the First Day of Chalica, my true Love gave to me: Affirmation of our human dignity!

Unitarian Universalism's First Principle reminds us to affirm and promote the inherent worth  $\approx$  dignity of every person.

Here are some ideas for celebrating Day 1 of Chalica:

- ♥ Write a card thanking someone for being who they are.
- ♥ Tell someone you love them.
- ♥ Call or text someone you haven't talked to for a while.

1  
each person  
IS IMPORTANT



**Chalica** is a week-long celebration of our Unitarian Universalist Principles that begins on **Monday, December 2nd**, and lasts seven days. Consider observing Chalica this year by lighting a chalice, spending some time reflecting on the meaning of each day's principle, and then acting on it as a way to ground yourself in your UU values as we head into the holiday season and the New Year. More Chalica resources can be found [here](#).

On the Second Day of Chalica, my true Love gave to me: Compassion, Justice,  $\approx$  some Equity!

Unitarian Universalism's Second Principle reminds us to affirm and promote justice, equity,  $\approx$  compassion in human relations.

Here are some ideas for celebrating Day 2 of Chalica:

- ♥ Do something nice for a stranger or a friend.
- ♥ Donate a box of food to a local food bank.
- ♥ Call or email your legislator to talk about taking care of your community.

2  
BE KIND IN  
ALL YOU DO



On the Third Day of Chalica, my true Love gave to me: A chance to practice spirituality!

Unitarian Universalism's Third Principle reminds us to accept one another  $\approx$  continue to grow spiritually.

Here are some ideas for celebrating Day 3 of Chalica:

- ♥ Learn about a [famous UU](#) — or two or ten!
- ♥ Meditate. Or pray. Or both!
- ♥ Explore the readings in the back of our hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*.

3  
we're free  
TO LEARN  
TOGETHER



On the Fourth Day of Chalica, my true Love gave to me: a chance to look for truth responsibly!

Unitarian Universalism's Fourth Principle affirms our need for a free and responsible search for truth  $\approx$  meaning.

Here are some ideas for celebrating Day 4 of Chalica:

- ♥ Read a book about a different religion.
- ♥ Ask your friends how they celebrate the winter holy days?
- ♥ Celebrate "truth with a lower-case t"!

4  
and search  
FOR WHAT  
IS TRUE



On the Fifth Day of Chalica, my true Love gave to me: One Vote for Me!

Unitarian Universalism's Fifth Principle says we support the democratic process  $\approx$  the right of conscience, in our churches and in the world.

Here are some ideas for celebrating Day 5 of Chalica:

- ♥ Use a family vote to solve a problem or make a decision.
- ♥ Speak out when you need to, OR, listen to someone who is usually quiet.
- ♥ Watch [this video](#) about how a bill becomes a law.

5  
all  
PEOPLE  
NEED A  
VOICE



On the Sixth Day of Chalica, my true Love gave to me: a world that is peaceful and free!

Unitarian Universalism's Sixth Principle commits us to the goal of a world with peace, liberty,  $\approx$  justice for all.

Here are some ideas for celebrating Day 6 of Chalica:

- ♥ Fold a [peace crane](#), and [learn their story](#).
- ♥ Learn "Meditation on Breathing" in *Singing the Journey*. (It's #1009.)
- ♥ Write your own peace song, prayer, or meditation.

6  
BUILD A FAIR  
AND PEACEFUL  
WORLD



On the Seventh Day of Chalica, my true Love gave to me: a planet where we live sustainably!

Unitarian Universalism's Seventh Principle reminds us to care for the interdependent web of all existence, of which we are a part.

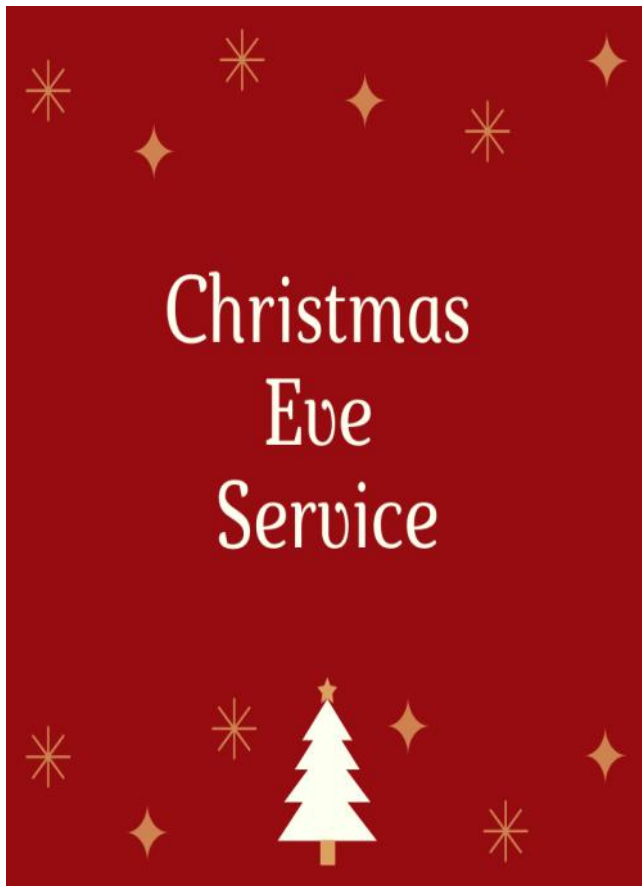
Here are some ideas for celebrating Day 7 of Chalica:

- ♥ Take a family walk; while you're out, pick up any litter you see.
- ♥ Take your reusable bags to the grocery store. Use them! ☺
- ♥ Look up at the stars.

7  
we take  
care OF  
THE earth



# INSPIRED SPIRITUALITY



**Wednesday, December 24th**

**6:00 PM**

**People's Church**

**1758 N. 10th St, Kalamazoo**

Please allow us to cordially invite you to our Christmas Eve Service. We are delighted to be once again celebrating together.

We will take a journey through the biblical Christmas story from Mary's point of view. Our choirs will delight you with inspiring performances, while we as a congregation will also have ample opportunities to sing our most favorite Christmas songs.

Please, allow afterward for some time for fellowship and to share conversation, cookies, and warm beverages.

Kindly and Lovingly,

Rev. Gy Ludvig-McCartney and Rev. Rachel Lonberg

**Sunday, December 29th**

**10:00 AM**

**UU Community Church**

The Burning Bowl, a traditional UU ceremony held at the cusp of the new year, is a ritual of letting go, cleansing, intention, and hope.

During the ritual, you will be invited to write down words or a phrase on a small piece of flash paper as a way to sum up what you wish to leave behind before entering the new year.

You will have an opportunity to feed your piece of paper to the flames as a way to symbolically unburden yourself of that which no longer serves you.

The paper will burn quickly, releasing the old and making way for the new.

Visit the [UUA Website](#) to learn more about the Burning Bowl.



# LEADERSHIP

## Board President's Corner

by [Nancy Calme](#), Board President



I must confess that in my many years as a Unitarian Universalist, I have only very rarely paid attention to what is offered by the UU Association –neither the national body nor the Midwestern Region. When I was employed and raising a family, looking beyond our own congregation was just one thing too many to fit into my busy schedule. Even now, with my introverted nature I experience big gatherings and conferences as a drain on my energy, so voluntarily attending the General Assembly or regional meetings is a hard sell for me.

That said, I know that leveraging the ideas and wisdom from the UUA is the smart thing to do. So, when the UUA offered a series of webinars entitled, ***Small Numbers, Infinite Possibilities***, I signed us up. Our Office Administrator/ Director of Religious Education, Miriam Epskamp advertised the opportunity to the congregation and hosting a watch party at the church so that people could experience it together.

The first webinar, *Smalls Making a Big Difference*, pointed out some of the big advantages of small congregations, such as the nimble decision-making that is possible, the close relationships, and the warm welcoming atmosphere. That sounds like us! A common pitfall is getting unbalanced in our perception of ourselves, worrying more over the negatives than acknowledging and celebrating what we have. We need to pay attention to both sides of the scale.

Successful small congregations tend to reach outside to meet social justice needs and form partnerships with other organizations. They empower their members to follow their passions to champion causes that mean the most to them. UUCC has done this through our support of our adopted refugee family and sharing of the arts in the “Our Town” production and the big joint choral concert.

Please consider watching future webinars in this series – either at home, with others at the church, or on your own schedule via the taped recordings. We need to bring this excellent resource back to the group to find ways to maintain our Mightiness. If you don't, [contact the church office](#) and Miriam will point you in the right direction. You can find out more about upcoming sessions and find links to the recordings of the ones you missed on [page 7](#) of this newsletter. The weekly emails are the place to watch for reminders about these webinars in the coming months.





# STEWARDSHIP

## Program Council

by [Erin Michael](#), Board Vice-President

At our November meeting, the Program Council decided to continue meeting monthly to provide better continuity and communication. The Program Council will meet on the 2nd Sunday of every month. Notes from our last meeting can be found [here](#).



As we stated at the beginning of the church year, one focus of the Board of Trustees is to improve the flow of information between committees and groups and strengthen our combined brainpower to solve issues and take advantage of opportunities. Program Council is a central cog to achieving success and support one another for events and initiatives. It is essential that each committee and group has a knowledgeable representative present at Program Council meetings to ensure a flow of accurate and timely information between groups.

Program Council only works if YOU participate. Join us on **Sunday, December 8th after coffee time**. We work hard to keep the discussion to 45 minutes. We are looking forward to seeing you there! Contact [Erin Michael](#) with questions.

## Small Numbers, Infinite Possibilities

Over the last two months, members of the congregation have gathered in the church office to watch webinars conducted by Unitarian Universalist Association staff and focused on the needs and challenges of small congregations like ours. The webinars have offered interesting information, food for thought, and sparked some good conversations.

You can see what you have missed by following the links below to watch recordings of the webinars that have already taken place.

*Small  
but  
Mighty*

October: [Smalls Making a Big Difference](#)

November: [Right-Sizing Your Congregation's Operations](#)

The other webinars in the series will take place on the following dates:

**January 15<sup>th</sup>: Stewardship and Sustainability**

**February 12<sup>th</sup>: Being the Beloved Community**

Please consider joining the viewing party. Each live webinar airs at 7:00 PM and runs for 90 minutes. Discussion among viewers will take place afterward for about 30 minutes.

Plans are also in the works for regional 'in-person' gatherings of congregations that have participated in the webinars on or around March 14th. More information about these events will be available closer to the date.

If you have any questions about **Small Numbers, Infinite Possibilities**, contact [Miriam](#) in the office.

# LEARNING AND GROWTH

## Women's Book Group

by [Stephanie Grathwol](#), Chair

For Friday, **December 13th, 2019**, the Women's Book Group selection will be: ***Pride*** by Ibi Zoboi

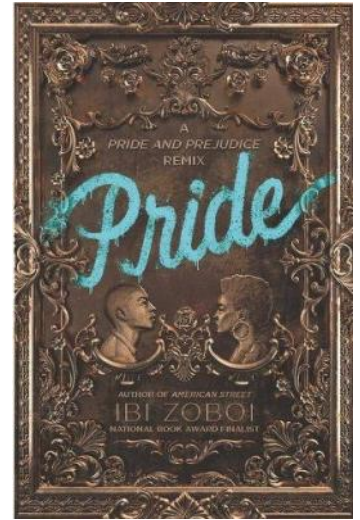
From Goodreads:

"*Pride and Prejudice* gets remixed in this smart, funny, gorgeous retelling of the classic, starring all characters of color from Ibi Zoboi, National Book Award Finalist and author of *American Street*."

Zuri Benitez has pride. Brooklyn pride, family pride, and pride in her Afro-Latino roots. But pride might not be enough to save her rapidly gentrifying neighborhood from becoming unrecognizable."

11:30 AM - Lunch at the [Cove Lakeside Bistro](#) on West Lake in Portage. Please contact Stephanie Grathwol before December 11th to reserve your seat for lunch.

1:00 PM - Book discussion in the UCC Community Room. All UCC women are welcome!  
Discussion Leader: Denise Hartsough Hostess: Stephanie Grathwol



## Doing Our Own Work: An Anti-Racism Seminar for White People

**March 20 & 21, April 17 & 18, and May 22 & 23 at People's Church**

At this time in our nation, we are witnessing an alarming resurgence of white supremacy and state sanctioned violence. It is imperative that those of us who are white do the deep work required to claim and embody an anti-racist identity, understand the privilege we carry, and interrupt racism where we live, work, study, and volunteer. *Doing Our Own Work* helps white people move through places where we often get stuck, so that we can step up with courage, humility, and consistency to participate in movements led by people of color and help move other white people to greater anti-racist awareness and action. Enrollment is limited to 24 people to facilitate in-depth reflection, dialogue, and community. Anti-racist action and reflection form the heart of *Doing Our Own Work* and will explore the following topics:

- The four realms of racism and change: personal, interpersonal, institutional, and cultural
- Historical roots of racism in the U.S.
- Movements for racial justice in the U.S.
- White privilege and unearned advantage
- Claiming and shaping an anti-racist identity
- Practicing the skills of interrupting racism
- Strategies for institutional change
- Developing networks of support and accountability



For Information and Registration: <https://www.alliesforchange.org/doow-kalamazoo-2020>



# FELLOWSHIP AND FUN



## Men's Group Breakfasts Resume

After a brief hiatus, the monthly meetings of the Men's Group have resumed! The Men's Group Breakfast is a great way to enjoy good food, meet new people, share thoughts, stories, and ideas. All are welcome!

The group will meet for breakfast and conversation at Burger Town Grille, 9136 Shaver Road, at 8:30 AM on the third Saturday of the month. Their next gathering will be **December 21st**.

If you plan to attend, please RSVP [Ken VanEseltine](#). If no one contacts him, the breakfast will be canceled.

## Service Auction is a Big Success from the [Stewardship Committee](#)

Thanks to all those who participated in our 2019 Service Auction!

Again, this year there were many interesting items up for auction. We all enjoyed pizza, salad, and drinks prior to the auction. A special thanks to our auctioneer, Lee Smittendorf. And once again, we exceeded our target for the Service Auction by raising \$4,269.67, after expenses.

The final results are available [here](#) to determine who bid on your offerings. A hardcopy of the list is also available to share at the Welcome Desk.

## Holiday Decorating Day



Help get UUCU ready for the holiday season on **Sunday, December 8th**. Bring a snack and stay after Program Council to help decorate!

We are in need of both white and multicolored strings of lights. Please bring some if you can donate them or let us borrow them for the season. If you have any questions, contact Mary King - 269.375.7674.

## Upcoming Potluck Schedule

December 1, 2019 = NO POTLUCK  
 January 5, 2020 = Stephen Tasko & Friends  
 February 2 = Board of Trustees  
 March 1 = None due to Canvass Dinner  
 April 5 = Caring Group & Religious Education  
 May 3 = Sunday Services & Sunday Celebration  
 June 7 = Men's Group & Women's Book Group  
 Contact [Stephanie Grathwol](#) with any questions.



# RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

## R.E.flections

From [Miriam Epskamp](#), Director of Religious Education (DRE)

“What we need is here”.

This line from Wendell Berry’s poem, *The Wild Geese*, has been on my mind this week as I make plans for December’s religious education theme, ‘abundance’. Is this what I want our young people to understand about abundance? “What we need is here”?



It is a lovely way to think about abundance. Perhaps it resonates with you? We all are surrounded by riches- our family, our friends, simple pleasures, fond memories, the beauty of the earth. We are blessed with countless gifts. We should be grateful. “What we need is here”.

But...the another thing that has been on my mind this week, as I prepare for the R.E. led Social Justice Sunday service on December 1st, is the United Way’s ALICE Report. ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed and the latest report shows that the percentage of households living in poverty or barely getting by financially in Michigan has grown to 43%, up from 40% in 2017.

How can the message “What we need is here” resound with people who are struggling to meet basic needs such as food, heat, healthcare, transportation, and housing? How can the message of ‘abundance’ be relevant if it runs counter to the reality experienced by so many?

Perhaps we need another way to approach abundance. Imagine if we changed Berry's words to “WHO we need is here”. Could the richness that is community be something that can transcend class and socio-economic differences; especially if that community is made up of people working together to create a world that is more just and equitable for all?

This congregation is blessed with an abundance of individuals working to make the world a better place – on their own, in small groups, and as a church community. We may be small, but we are mighty in spirit. We can't do everything, but we can do something, and we usually do.

### December Religious Education

Date	Session	Teacher
12/1	Multi-gen Service	N/A
12/8	Traditional RE - Abundance	Regena
12/15	Mindful Sunday - Labyrinth	Miriam
12/22	Social Justice Sunday	Miriam
12/29	Multi-gen Service	N/A

My message about abundance to the kids (and to you) is that no matter who we are, where we are from, or what our struggles may be, we are not alone. “WHO we need is here” at this Unitarian Universalist Community Church. We are blessed with abundance. We should be grateful. May it be so.

# SOCIAL JUSTICE

## Guest at Your Table

On November 24th we kicked off 'Guest at Your Table', our annual collection for the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC).

By bringing home a beautiful Stories of Hope booklet and 'Guest at Your Table' box, families and individuals can learn about how the UUSC puts our shared values into action. Through a potent combination of advocacy, education, and partnerships with grassroots organizations and human rights leaders, UUSC helps to uphold human rights and protects communities at risk in this country and around the world.

Sharing our blessings through 'Guest at Your Table' ensures that UUSC's import work continues.

If you haven't got them yet, please be sure to pick up your 'Guest at Your Table' materials at Welcome Desk. Place the box on your dinner table or another gathering place until the end of the year and consider making contributions. If you prefer, you can give online at [uusc.org/givetoguest](http://uusc.org/givetoguest).

The 'Guest at Your Table' program will run until January 5th. Please plan to return your box and your donation to UUSC on that Sunday.

Questions about 'Guest at Your Table' can be directed to [Rev. Gy](#).

## Eating for Climate Resilience

December 13th

12:00 -1:00 PM

KVCC - 418 E. Walnut St

Marilyn J. Schlack Culinary Building



A free talk part of the [Fridays for the Future](#) series presented by the Kalamazoo Climate Crisis Coalition. Chefs Jenny Doesema and Hristina Petrovska will present a high quality, engaging session on actions you can take for a carbon-neutral future.

**Anti Racism Film Series** The Anti-Racism Task Force at First United Methodist Church in Kalamazoo invites you to join the discussion at their film series on the third Thursday of the month.

On **December 19th at 6:30 PM** they will present an excerpt from a recorded sermon by:

### Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II

Barber is a pastor and social justice advocate who approaches social justice through the lens of the ethical and moral treatment of people as laid out in the Christian Bible.

The video showings will be in the FUMC Youth Tribe theater on the lower level. Snacks and beverages will be provided. A brief discussion will be held following the presentations.



## Generosity Sunday - January 5th

Our next Generosity Sunday collection will be on January 5th. All loose cash and change in the offering basket, along with checks written to UUSC with "Generosity Sunday" in the memo line, will be given to [Samaritas](#) in support of their New Americans program which offers refugees (including our Congolese friends) resettlement services, job training, and school readiness.

Donations to Generosity Sunday can also be given online through our website.

More information about this Generosity Sunday will be available in the January newsletter.



# HISTORY



## Roadhouse to Reflection:

### *A biography of our 60- year-old church building*

Did you know ghosts named Jim, Johnnie and Jack have haunted our church building for decades? Who were these spirits?

Why Jim Beam, Johnnie Walker and Jack Daniels (and friends).

Those spirits, and a host of others, spent plenty of time in our church building over its 60-year life. When it first appeared in the 1959 phone book, the building had an address of 10441 South US 131, not Shaver Road. The four-lane, divided, 70 mph US 131 behemoth of today had yet to be built. The building began life as a "road house" in the dining and drinking business.

First christened Stafford's Drive-In in the late 1950s, the name was soon shortened to just Stafford's, known for fine dining, banquet and meeting space, and (of course) cocktails. That's why a bar sits near our kitchen. White paint tries to disguise it but fails.

The building was one of two Stafford's in the greater Kalamazoo area, the other being on West Michigan Avenue.

Much like an ordinary, late middle age human, our building has put its heavy party and drinking days behind it. But fond memories remain.

### **Good Memories...**

Pat and Chet Taylor of Portage recall those days well. Their three daughters all had wedding receptions there in the '60s and early '70s.

"They had rooms upstairs & downstairs," says Pat about the building. Chet's union meetings also happened at Stafford's when he worked for Southern Paper Company. Stafford's banquet planner suggested they serve punch at their first daughter's wedding reception. "One was with alcohol and one was plain," Pat said. "It was a buffet, and it was just loaded with ham and..." her eyes glaze over as she again sees it all in her mind's eye. "It was *huge*. There was a great big thigh of the cow," she says of the roast beef. Pat says the server "cut as much as they wanted" and there was a tasty, warm pineapple sauce to pour over the ham.



# HISTORY

Other clues hint at our building's former incarnation – a set of swinging doors with windows, a stage, a room with industrial size sinks, a nicely finished basement, a coach port outside the front door, and two main entrances – one for folks headed to downstairs meetings and banquets, the other for customers at street level.

Church member Julie Kelemen recalls the building as Jim Ryan's – what Stafford's became in 1972. The building kept that name until 1976.

"It was a really nice place my parents went to – a white tablecloth place. Once when a few high school friends and I wanted to go out for a *nice* dinner my Mom suggested it, so that was the place."

That dinner was when Julie learned the difference between White Russian and Black Russian cocktails.

"Legal drinking age was 18 back then. I was at least a year shy of that, but an older friend in our group was 18. He ordered a White Russian followed by a Black Russian. Pat taught us the difference and let us taste his drinks. The rest of us thought we were doing something daring. We were pretty straight arrow kids who all went to Hackett (Catholic) High School."

## ***Hard times arrive...***

After the Jim Ryan days, our building sputtered through two more incarnations – The Irish Fisherman until '78 and Portage House until 1980.

And then, well, nothing. For a full six years – 1980 - '86 -- the building was officially listed as "vacant." No wine glasses clinked. The kitchen fan did not roar. No chef hollered at dishwashers ducking outside for a smoke. Steak sizzles and smells ceased, and parking lot pavement gave way to potholes. Holiday lights casting feeble light onto snow outside no longer twinkled behind the plate glass.

Little – save the spirits of Jack, Johnnie and Jim -- remained.

But that was sufficient: In 1987 the refurbished building roared back into business as Celebration Hall, a banquet establishment that hummed steadily for another 15 years until it closed in 2002 and was briefly dubbed Libbrecht's Catering for another year.



Finally, in 2003, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Southwest Michigan moved in and remains to this day.

Even though Johnnie Walker, Jim Beam and Jack Daniels bottles no longer sit behind the bar, their spirits still linger. They keep the building's reputation for friendly fellowship alive and well.

~[Julie Kelemen](#)

# THE LARGER FELLOWSHIP



## UUA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### GA Registration is Now Open

General Assembly (GA) is the annual gathering of Unitarian Universalists for conducting business of the Association, exploring the theological underpinnings of our faith, and leaning fully into our mission and principles. Please join us **Wednesday, June 24 through Sunday, June 28, 2020** in Providence, Rhode Island for this 5-day immersive experience themed **Rooted, Inspired & Ready!** Join your faith family at inspirational worship services, informative workshops and a bustling exhibit

hall. We anticipate that 4,500+ UUs will gather for this unforgettable experience and leave with renewed energy and innovative ideas for congregational and community engagement.

Full-time registration is \$400 for adults, \$250 for high school youth and retired and candidate ministers, \$150 for off-site registrants. Early bird registration is now open at [uua.org/ga/registration](http://uua.org/ga/registration). Rates increase on March 16th.

## MidAmerica



Saturday, April 18, 2020

**KEYNOTE: TAQUIENA BOSTON**



Please save the date for our upcoming, Unitarian Universalist MidAmerica Regional Assembly (RA) which will be held at the **Unitarian Universalist Church, Rockford, IL, on Saturday, April 18, 2020**. The keynote speaker will be [Taquiena Boston](#), Special Advisor to the Unitarian Universalist Association President for Institutional Inclusion, Equity, and Change. The day will feature worship, the annual business meeting, lunch, keynote presentation, and select workshops. On Friday evening, April 17, the UU Church in Rockford will graciously host an evening gathering for those in town. The annual business meeting and the keynote speaker will be live streamed for those who are interested but not able to attend. Information about workshops will be forthcoming. Be sure to save the date!

# CALENDAR

## DECEMBER

### Choir Rehearsals

All rehearsals will run from 6:45 - 8:30 PM on Tuesday, December 3, 10, and 17

Please contact [Nick](#) for more information

#### Sunday, December 1

10:00 am - Service with Miriam Epskamp, DRE  
NO POTLUCK

#### Monday, December 2

4:00 pm - Board of Trustees Meeting

#### Sunday, December 8

10:00 am - Service with Rev. Gy  
11:30 am - Program Council Meeting  
12:30 pm - Holiday Decorating Day

#### Friday, December 13

1:00- 3:00 pm Women's Book Group

#### Sunday, December 15

10:00 am - Service with Rev. Gy

#### Saturday, December 21

8:30 am - Men's Breakfast at Burger Town

#### Sunday, December 22

10:00 am - Service with Mary Roscoe

#### Wednesday, December 24

6:00 pm - Christmas Eve Service at Peoples Church

#### Sunday, December 29

10:00 am - Service with Rev. Gy



### Committee Meetings

**Sunday Services:** Wednesday, December 11 at 5:30 pm

**Stewardship:** Thursday, December 12 at 12:15 pm

**Social Justice Team:** Sunday, December 15 at 11:30 am

For the latest, up-to-date information about our activities and events visit our [website](#) and our [online calendar](#).

### Weather Emergencies:



In the event of severe weather please check your email, our [FaceBook page](#) and [website](#), [WWMT's Closing Alerts](#), or listen to the radio stations WKZO 590 AM or WKFR 103.3 FM for information about our closing before you head out to church.

**UU Community Church  
is served by:**

Rev. Gy Ludvig-McCartney M.Div., M.A.  
Consulting Minister  
By Appointment Only  
[gyludvig@gmail.com](mailto:gyludvig@gmail.com)  
Cell: 269-352-2412

Miriam Epskamp  
Office Administrator and  
Director of Religious Education  
Hours: Wed 10-3 and Fri 12-5  
[uucommunity@gmail.com](mailto:uucommunity@gmail.com)  
Church office: 269-324-7262  
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Nick Sienkiewicz  
Music Director  
[nicholas.sienkiewicz@outlook.com](mailto:nicholas.sienkiewicz@outlook.com)

**2019-2020 Board of Trustees**

**Nancy Calme**

**Erin Michael**

**Denise Sonier**

**Betty Lee Ongley**

**Larry Higgins**

**The next Newsletter Deadline is  
Wednesday, December 18th at NOON**

Please send submissions to:

**[uuccnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:uuccnewsletter@gmail.com)**

***CommUUnity Matters***

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