



# CommUnity Matters

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest Michigan

January 2020

## January 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, January 5th- "Letters to Self" with Rev. Gy**

Intention is a powerful force. In fact, it is a prerequisite to creation. Rev. Gy has found that humans create all the time, but the problem is, most of the time it is done unconsciously. On this day we will have the opportunity to set our intentions for the coming year, so our process of creation can be more conscious. Here's to a meaningful New Year!

### **Sunday, January 12- "Grow Yourself Up" with Rev. Gy**

Rev. Gy has been reading *Grow Yourself Up: How to Bring Your Best to All of Life's Relationships* by Jenny Brown, MSW. The central message of *Growing Yourself Up* is that it is impossible to separate understanding the individual from understanding relationships and that *all* of life's relationships are integral to increasing self-awareness and growing maturity. Rev. Gy will share some of the insights she has gained from this interesting read.

### **Sunday, January 17 - "No Racial Justice without Economic Justice" with Rev. Gy**

We will honor Martin Luther King Day by exploring King's often overlooked legacy of fighting for economic justice and the empowerment of poor and working-class people and his conviction that there can be no genuine equality without addressing economic disparity.

### **Sunday, January 26 - "Healing" with Rev. Gy**

Rev. Gy will help us explore the idea that healing fractures in family, communities, nations, and the Earth itself needs to begin within.

**HAPPY ★ NEW ★ YEAR**

# FROM THE MINISTER

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

Oh, what a year this has been! Personally, this was the hardest year of my life. Most of you know that I had a shingles outbreak on my left jaw and it triggered trigeminal neuralgia, a disease that has no cure and is also known as the “suicide diagnosis”. I do understand why it got this ominous name.

Most of the year it seems as though I was “missing in action” with a few times in between when the pain was just a bit more bearable. Then, early November I discovered a rub that soothes my trigeminal nerve and since I cancelled the surgery that was supposed to kill the nerve. I am cautiously optimistic that the relief, though not a hundred percent, will persist. This much pain I can live with.

At the onset of the pain I thought I can handle it. This is what I did all that spiritual work for. I told myself, I am a professional, I will be able to function. I was wrong on both accounts. It only took a few months of intense pain for me to feel broken and at times completely unable to function. Pain aside, it was also an exercise in humility.

The church leadership and community couldn’t have been more loving and supportive. I have never felt held so gently in my entire professional life. I thank you all for that! Jacquis gave us her notice sometime early Spring. I was sad to see her leave as were our youngins, but knew that wherever she’ll land she’ll make it better.

As love would have it, just in time Miriam moved back from up North and she rejoined the UUCS staff, filling both the Administrative Assistant and DRE positions. With her a familiar sense of calm and competence returned. She has never experienced me at my best and she graciously picked up the many slacks behind me. She’s done it with grace, and kindness.

We’ve done much this year. At the latest Program Council we celebrated at least 7 accomplishments and that doesn’t even come close to all we did.

I would, however, like to highlight one major accomplishment: I am infinitely grateful and touched by the way we came together to uplift and help in all ways possible our adopted Congolese family. I can relate to their experience and I know from personal experience how much the love and support of the local people means to a newcomer. Life is so different here for someone coming straight from a refugee camp!

I am forever moved by the generosity of our beloved community. We came together and in no time at all raised enough money to buy them a beautiful van big enough to fit them all. Then brave Marsha, Steve, and Peggy taught Jean to drive!!! And now he has a job, transportation and hope for a good future. Last I talked to him he said: “America is good!!!”

Yes, there is much goodness in us, around us. There may be much turmoil in our world and as long as we remember the goodness in us, we shall overcome.

I am reminded of a quote from Maya Angelou: “You have to develop ways so that you can take up for yourself, and then you take up for someone else. And so sooner or later, you have enough courage to really stand up for the human race and say, ‘I’m a representative.’”

I believe in ways small and large, this is what we desire to do. Be a representative. And do some good.

Happy holidays to us all and a Happy New Year!!! Here’s to a good one!



# CARING COMMUNITY



## JANUARY CARING COMMUNITY NEWS

*"One kind word can warm three winter months."*

*~ Japanese Proverb*

As the star wheel turns, some of our members start the new year with celebrations. A favorite that we all enjoy is Betty Lee Ongley's birthday (25th), which will be celebrated on the 18th at the annual Chili Supper hosted by the Calme's. THERE WILL BE CAKE! (See page for more info)

Fellow January birthday celebrants are Dick Bott, Pat Fuehr, Ron Crowell, Mary King, Judy Oliver, Kevin Brozovich, and Jo Cooper. The cake bakers will be busy.

Memories of two of our late members always bring smiles to the faces and warmth to the hearts of all who knew them: Susie Johnson (2006) and Otto Byers (2015).

Stephanie Grathwol will be visiting family in Portland, OR until January 9. She will then continue her support of her cousin, Cindy, who is living with endometrial cancer that has metastasized to her brain. Stephanie asks that we include her cousin Cindy in our thoughts and prayers.

No word yet on the rescheduling of Nancy Crowell's shoulder surgery. We wonder if postponing until after the holidays felt like a reprieve or just prolonged the suspense.

On the bright side, Rev. Gy reports that she is feeling much better now that she has found a way to make her pain more manageable. She is taking things one day at a time and has put off surgery indefinitely.

A suggestion for a New Year's Resolution: take every opportunity to reach out with a smile, a sincere compliment, a listening ear, or a kind word. These things matter.

Your caring point persons are: Nancy Crowell 381-7659, Judy Pigg-Behrendt 217-5252, Judy Oliver 353-9397. If you have a need or are aware of a need, please contact one of them.

Sharing is Caring!

*We have a whole new year ahead of us  
and wouldn't it be wonderful if we could  
all be a little more gentle with each other,  
and a little more loving,  
have a little more empathy,  
and maybe, next year at this time,  
we'd like each other a little more.*

*~ Judy Garland*



# INSPIRED SPIRITUALITY

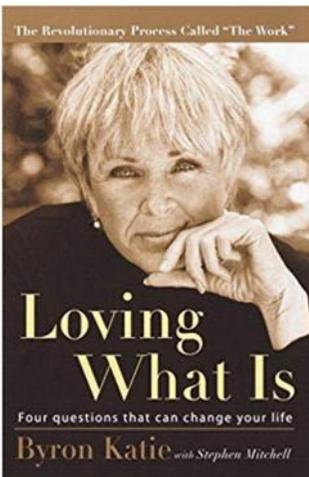
## BRAYER/WISER

### COURAGE AND COMPASSION FOR LIFE AS IT IS

Have you ever wished for a few words of encouragement or wisdom to help you make it through the hard edges and complicated choices life throws at you? The Unitarian Universalist Association has got you covered! You can sign up for Braver/Wiser, a weekly email message of courage and compassion delivered straight to your inbox.

Every Wednesday you will receive an original written reflection by a contemporary religious leader and a brief prayer grounded in Unitarian Universalism. Topics are as wide ranging as Love, Family, God, Community, Relationships, Acceptance, Hope, Failure and many more.

To sign up for this weekly dose of inspiration and wisdom visit the [Braver/Wiser Community](#).



### Loving What Is Classes Resume

Health concerns forced the **Loving What Is** Classes to be suspended earlier this fall. We are happy to announce that classes will resume in January for those who were already registered.

The classes will meet at UCC on Wednesdays - January 8th, 15th, 22nd and February 5th and 12th. The afternoon session will meet from 12:00 - 2:00 PM and the evening session from 6:00 - 8:00 PM.

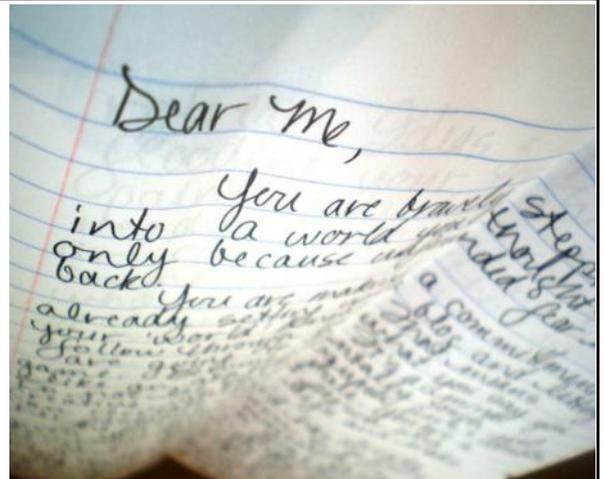
If you have any questions about the **Loving What Is** classes, please contact [Rev. Gy.](#)

### Letter to Self

At the service and in our Religious Education classes on January 5th, people of all ages will spend some time writing letter to their future selves.

If you are interested in the some of the science behind this valuable spiritual practice, check out this article from Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University:

<https://insight.kellogg.northwestern.edu/article/for-long-range-thinking-imagine-the-future-self>



# RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

## R.E.flections

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

On a Sunday not too long ago the kids tried their hands at creating Superheroes. They created names, costumes, and a Superhero Statement that explained how their hero would work to create an abundance of love, kindness, connection and/or community in the world. Their creations were amazing! They included: Awareness Man whose mask only allowed him to see from the sides to help him be more aware of things on the edges of life; Sisterly Love Girl who helps empower teenage girls with compliments that grow positive self-esteem; Recycle Girl who uses her powers to protect and save resources; and Leopard King who works to save the rainforest. The leaders joined in the fun and became Monarch Boy who repopulates the world with butterflies and Star Bright who creates light. It was fun to see how enthusiastically both kids and adults engaged in this activity. Super Heroes hold a unique place in American culture that transcends age, class, and race. My parent's generation watched Superman serials at the movie theater. The campy Batman TV series was required watching at my house when I was a kid. My children embraced the X-men universe and dressed up as Wolverine for Halloween. And this generation lines up to for tickets to the latest Avengers film. It would seem the greatest appeal of superheroes is power. The power to transform yourself from a mild-mannered alter ego to someone who can transform the world with your superhuman strength, x-ray vision, fancy gadgets, clairvoyance, or flames shooting from your fingertips are fantasies that most of us have entertained at some point in our lives. But perhaps what makes superheroes universally loved is that they use their power in the pursuit of justice, to positively transform the world. Justin Martin, a visiting assistant professor of psychology at Whitworth University in Spokane, Washington, who has done research in the area of superheroes puts it this way, "Justice is a common principle we all agree on. Those are things that shine when we look at superheroes: self-sacrifice and hope in the face of insurmountable odds." As we head into the new year, the kids will be exploring the concept of transformation, and what self-sacrifice and hope might look like in their lives. I suspect Superheroes will be a part of the continuing conversation. May it be so.



## January Religious Education

Date	Session	Teacher
1/5	Multi-gen Service	N/A
1/12	Traditional RE - Transformation	Regena
1/19	Mindful Sunday - Prayer	Larry Higgins
1/26	Social Justice Sunday	Miriam



Awareness Man making people Aware!

# LEADERSHIP

## Board President's Corner

by [Nancy Calme](#), Board President

I am writing this message in the throes of pre-Christmas high activity. We have been deep into Christmas concerts, parties, visits to friends and family members, and preparation for treasured overnight guests. It is a joyous but hectic time in many households.

By the time the newsletter is published, we will all be breathing a sigh of relief for the craziness passed and the new year beginning. For some, it is a bittersweet feeling. Holidays can bring to mind memories of happy holiday times from which we remember just the choicest bits. The difficulties evaporate in our minds and just the pleasant emotions remain. Then, there are the melancholy feelings about people who are now gone or relationships that are now strained and the comparisons to those rose-colored memories that seemed once perfect. Even when the holiday season goes without a hitch, the quiet time afterward gives one's emotions a chance to bubble up and surprise us with conflicting feelings.

This is the case for me, at least. I look back on my own childhood as the youngest in a large brood and how exciting it always was to be a part of everyone's secret plans, revealed on Christmas morning. Then, the fun of surprising my own little children as we re-enacted so many of the traditions from my family and my husband's, interwoven. Now, we have only a minor role in the Christmas excitement of our grandchildren and it is both happy for the brief shared experience and sad that it is so fleeting. I suspect that in January I will need a pick-me-up to take control of my emotional destiny and quit feeling sorry for myself that it is not exactly the way I wish.

What does this have to do with church? Well, my church family is part of my emotional support system. The annual chili supper that Joe and I host in January at church is a way to give back and, in turn, receive. It is part of making the life that we want to live and bringing together many of the people who matter to us. I sometimes reflect on what our lives would be without UUC and the bonds we build here, and I am surprised by the overflow of gratitude I feel for all of you. Thank you, and let us share this new year together.



# Meeting

Serving on the Board of Trustees are Nancy Calme, Erin Michael, Denise Sonier, Betty Lee Ongley, and Larry Higgins. They meet on the first Monday of the month in the Community Room of UUC from 4:00 - 6:00 PM. The minutes of their last meeting can found [here](#).

# STEWARDSHIP

## Program Council

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

Where can I go to lend my voice to the decision process on programming?  
How do I share all of my WONDERFUL ideas?  
Why are we not focusing on \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank)?

If you ever ask these questions, YOU are the answer! Your voice, your listening ears and your participation are needed to help drive our programming! If you attend UUCG, you are a member of Program Council.

At Program Council, we discuss and plan programming within our building which fulfills our Mission and Vision. We discuss events and activities in which we will participate as a congregation and share opportunities for ways to volunteer, create connection and support each other in these endeavors. We work to transform ourselves, our community and the world. So...not much! 😊

Program Council only works if YOU participate. Join us on **Sunday, January 12th after coffee time**. We work hard to keep the discussion to 45 minutes. We are looking forward to seeing you there!



## Generosity Sunday

We will have a Generosity Sunday collection on Sunday, January 5th.

All loose cash and change in the offering basket, along with checks written to UUCG 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.



## Small but Mighty

The next ***Small Numbers, Infinite Possibilities*** webinar, presented by the Unitarian Universalist Association and designed to help make the work of our small but mighty congregation easier, more joyful and more impactful, will take place on **Wednesday, January 15th at 7:00 PM**. The topic will be **Stewardship and Sustainability**.

UUCG members and friends are invited to gather in the Community Room to view and discuss the webinar.

If you have any questions about ***Small Numbers, Infinite Possibilities*** or if you plan to attend webinar in January, please contact the [Office](#).



# LEARNING AND GROWTH

## Women's Book Group

by [Stephanie Grathwol](#), Chair

For **Friday, January 10th**, the Women's Book Group selection will be:  
*The Magic Strings of Frankie Presto* by Mitch Albom

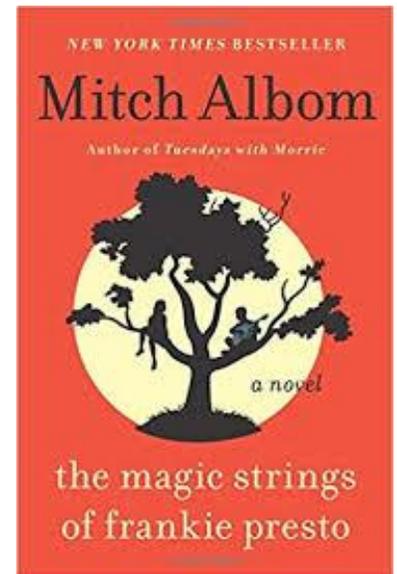
### [From Goodreads:](#)

Mitch Albom creates a magical world through his love of music in this remarkable new novel about the power of talent to change our lives

This is the epic story of Frankie Presto—the greatest guitar player who ever lived—and the six lives he changed with his six magical blue strings'

11:30 AM - Lunch at the [Fieldstone Grill](#) in Portage. Please contact Stephanie Grathwol to reserve your seat for lunch or if you have any questions.

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



## 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 **January 18th**.

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



## Coffee, Potluck, and Snacks



Our next Potluck lunch will be on January 5th at 11:30 AM. Potluck Sunday is a great day to invite a

friend or neighbor to church! Please remember to bring a dish to pass and a place setting from home to help us reduce the number of paper and plastic products we put in the landfill. If you are available to set up before or clean up afterward, please contact Potluck Host [Steve Tasko](#) and let him you can help.

Coffee Hosts are needed for 2020! Consider signing up to take a turn preparing coffee and bringing snacks to help make our time together on Sunday warm and inviting. You can sign up by the Welcome Desk or contact [Stephanie Grathwol](#).

# FELLOWSHIP AND FUN

## Leap with Love

Come celebrate Leap Year and Love as we combine Valentine's Day (a little late) with the extra day we're given only every four years!

Yes, on February 29th, the Big Trouble band will again come to UUCU. We are inviting the public to dance with us, and we hope most of our members and friends can attend to enjoy the evening and welcome our visitors.



Big Trouble - Dana, Jay, Joe, Mike B, Mike M, and Mike G.

Doors open at 7:00 p.m. A \$5.00 admission fee will help cover the cost of the band. Expect a beer and wine cash bar (for which Identification is required.) Snacks at modest cost also will be available.

## Mark your calendars now: Saturday, February 29, 7:00 PM

It will be the year 2024 before you can again kick up your heels on the 29th day of February. If you have questions or would like to help with arrangements, contact a member of the [Marketing Team](#) or the [Stewardship Committee](#).



## Chili Supper - January 18th

The Annual Guy & Jean Johnson "In Absentia" Chili Supper hosted by Joe and Nancy Calme is scheduled for Saturday, January 18<sup>th</sup>. If you didn't bid on this great item at our service auction, never fear, because there is still time to sign up.

The cost is \$10/person and kids are free. There will be regular and vegetarian chili, corn bread, chips and salsa, beer and soft drinks.

There will also be a special birthday cake for dessert. Plus music, games and prizes.

Don't miss this opportunity for fun, fellowship, and a little fundraising for UUCU!

Contact [Joe and Nancy](#) if you have questions!

# SOCIAL JUSTICE



## Guest at Your Table

Please plan to return your box and your donation to the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) to the church office by **Sunday, January 5th**. Thanks!

## UU the Vote

On January 12th the Unitarian Universalist Association will launch UU the Vote, a campaign focused on the 2020 elections.

From the UUA website : “Our overall goal is to create a decentralized, large-scale campaign that moves our faith communities into new or deeper action, making electoral engagement a strategic facet of any of the justice work we do, and strengthening our relationships to build direct democracies in beloved communities for the long haul.

If you have attended a rally, written a letter to an elected official, registered a voter, or supported a partner organization, you have already been doing the work of UU the Vote.

On January 12, 2020, UUs across the country will gather for an online event where we highlight the work our members are committing to, share the values and the vision that drive UU the Vote in this crucial time, and further advance what that work can look like for our groups.”

To learn more about this campaign visit:  
<https://www.uua.org/justice/vote2020>



## Soul Box Project

The kids at UUCC recently learned about a group in Portland, Oregon who are interested in creating a ‘massive art statement’ focused on Gun Violence. Following in the tradition of other national art projects like the AIDS Memorial Quilt, they hope to display tens of thousands of Soul Boxes to reveal the staggering number of victims of gun violence in America.

A Soul Box is a simple origami box. You can find instructions and materials to create one at the back of the sanctuary by the RE Bulletin board. Please consider taking time to fold a box and acknowledge a life loss to gun violence. When we have filled a box full of Soul Boxes, we will mail them to Oregon so that they may be included in the national display.

If you have questions, please speak to [Miriam](#).

## Earth Day 2020

From Hope for Creation, an interfaith response to climate change in Kalamazoo:



### Earth Day Festival: Planning Ahead The 50th Anniversary of Earth Day

Kalamazoo’s celebration for Earth Day is coming April 18th! An eco-arts project is starting soon for the big day, and welcomes contributors. Knitters, crafters, writers, and more! The kick-off in January will be a monthly night to share in the fun and envision together. Volunteers to inform faith communities also are invited to connect. Would you like to join this project or be kept in the loop? Details will be announced after the New Year! Please contact [Mey Hasbrook](#) with interest or questions. She is a member of Kalamazoo Friends Meeting (Quakers).

# CALENDAR

## JANUARY 2020

### Choir Rehearsals

All rehearsals will run from 6:45 - 8:30 PM on Tuesday, January 7, 14, 21, and 28

Please contact [Nick](#) for more information

#### **Sunday, January 5**

*Generosity Sunday*

10:00 am - Service with Rev. Gy

11:30 am - POTLUCK

#### **Monday, January 6**

4:00 pm - Board of Trustees Meeting

#### **Sunday, January 12**

10:00 am - Service with Rev. Gy

11:30 am - Program Council Meeting

#### **Friday, January 10**

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

6:00 pm - Human Resources Ad Hoc Committee

#### **Sunday, January 19**

10:00 am - Service with Rev. Gy

#### **Wednesday, January 15**

7:00 pm - Small Numbers, Infinite Possibilities Webinar

#### **Sunday, January 26**

10:00 am - Service with Mary Roscoe

11:30 am - Noble Goal Workshop with Darby Fetzer

#### **Saturday, January 18**

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

3:00 pm - Chili Supper

### Committee Meetings

**Sunday Services:** Wednesday, January 8 at 5:30 pm

**Stewardship:** Thursday, January 9 at 12:15 pm

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



**Martin Luther King Jr. Day**

### MLK Day of Service

Monday, January 20th

8:00 - 5:00 pm

City of Kalamazoo

Find out more [here](#).

### Loving What Is Classes

January 8, 15, and 22

12:00 - 2:00 pm and 6:00 - 8:00 pm

Please contact Rev. Gy for more information



### **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: Tues 10 -2 Wed 10-2 and Fri 12-5  
[uucommunity@gmail.com](mailto:uucommunity@gmail.com)  
Church office: 269-324-7262  
Cell phone: 269-993-8758

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, January 22nd at NOON**

Please send submissions to:

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

*CommUUnity Matters*

**Unitarian Universalist Community Church  
of Southwest Michigan**

10441 Shaver Rd.  
Portage, MI 49024  
269-324-7262  
[uucommunity@gmail.com](mailto:uucommunity@gmail.com)  
[www.uucommunitychurch.com](http://www.uucommunitychurch.com)  
[www.facebook.com/uuccswmi](https://www.facebook.com/uuccswmi)

