



CommUnity Matters

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest Michigan

May 2020

May Services

All in-person Services and Religious Education Classes and Events have been **CANCELED** until further notice.

Online Services will be live-streamed via [Facebook](#) on Sundays at 10:00 AM.

Video recordings of services are on [YouTube](#).

Our situation seems to change quickly from day to day. Rev. Gy will hold space during May services for whatever seems to be of greatest concern as we all learn to navigate life during the time of COVID-19.

Please visit our UUC website at uucommunitychurch.org where you can find up-to-date information.

From the Board President

[Nancy Calme](#)

During the upheaval of this Covid-19 pandemic, your board is scrambling to adapt to the new conditions. I am so grateful to be able to turn to the UU Association and MidAmerica Region for good advice and best practices. If you are curious and would like to read what they have to say, go to <https://www.uua.org/safe/pandemics>.

I have also been attending weekly videoconferences with Lisa Presley, our MidAmerica Region representative. She gathers leaders from congregations throughout the region, listens to our concerns and gives us a forum to share solutions we have stumbled upon. One solution was the loan offered through the CARES act, which includes the Paycheck Protection Program to help small businesses. The UUA urged congregations to continue paying all staff – both salaried and hourly employees – for the remainder of the congregational program year. This is critical both to care for our employees, as well as to avoid costly terminations and the disruptions that arise from laying off staff which would slow our future recovery. Think of our cleaning staff and musicians who cannot work when the building is closed.

I worked with Rev. Gy and the Finance Team to very quickly assemble the financial information required to apply for the Payroll Protection Program through First National Bank of Michigan to cover our staff and utility payments for May and June. We don't yet know the effect on our income of the economic changes and canceled building rentals and fundraising events. Most of this loan is expected to be forgiven when we use it primarily to cover payroll. It was really a no-brainer to apply for the opportunity and it looks like we were approved before the funds were used up.

Rev. Gy and Miriam Epskamp have been working hard to fine-tune the processes for presenting live video of our Sunday services and weekly gatherings of congregants. Steve Tasko lent his technical expertise to identify camera and sound equipment that would make it all possible. I have been so impressed with how everyone pitched in to solve problems in the middle of a crisis!



(Continued on [Page 2](#))

MOTHER'S DAY

An evaluation team gathered for video-based interviews of candidates for the position of Musical Director to replace Nick when he leaves. We haven't found a new Music Director yet, but we will let you know as soon as we do.

The board is meeting more frequently to address the fast-changing situation. We will be coming up with a means of holding our annual meeting and the voting that is required in a way that meets the requirements of our bylaws. Flexibility will be required to adapt to this emergency, and we will do everything we can to find solutions that work for people with varying levels of technical capability.

Thank you to all the people pitching in to help our church and to the whole congregation for their patience and caring for one another.

Mother's Day

Mother's Day is on Sunday, May 10th. Both Unitarian Julia Ward Howe and Methodist Anna Jarvis can lay claim as the founder Mother's Day. They both lived at about the same time though in vastly different circumstances. One was a wealthy Boston socialite, the other an Appalachian minister's wife. But both women saw a connection between motherhood and the fight for social and economic justice. Both felt empowered to use the resources they had to try to improve people's lives and make meaningful change in the world. And both were markedly affected by the Civil War.

When the Civil War broke out, Julia Ward Howe, wife of a wealthy physician and prominent Boston Unitarian, was involved with the Sanitary Commission, a precursor of the Red Cross. She saw first hand the physical and psychological wounds suffered by soldiers returning from the front. She became an ardent pacifist and went on what some called a one-woman peace crusade. In 1870, she was moved to write a Peace Proclamation that began with an impassioned "appeal to womanhood" to rise against war. She called for an International Mothers' Day of Peace, which she envisioned as an annual international peace festival. For nearly 30 years afterward, Mothers' Day for Peace was celebrated on June 2 in some fashion in many communities in the United States.

Anna Jarvis, married to a poor country preacher, moved from hamlet to hamlet in West Virginia in the years before the Civil War. Concerned about the health and sanitary conditions of her husband's parishioners, she organized what she called Mothers' Day Work Clubs that sought to improve the lives of women. In the years following the war, the challenges facing the communities changed as the men returning from the battlefield to West Virginia sometimes had fought on both sides of the conflict. In 1865, Anna Jarvis organized the first Mother's Friendship Day as a way to bring reconciliation to divided communities. Jarvis's daughter, also named Anna, worked for an official, nationally recognized Mothers' Day following her mother's death, in part to honor mother's humanitarian work.

Both Julia Ward Howe and Anna Jarvis were inspired to use the words 'Mother's Day' as a way of promoting peace and reconciliation. Despite these idealistic beginnings, Mother's Day has become the holiday we know today mainly through the efforts of a florist industry trade group.

To learn more about Mother's Day check out sermons by UU ministers [Lyn Ogelsby](#) and [Steve Edington](#) that provided the research and inspiration for this article.

INSPIRED SPIRITUALITY

Staying Centered

These are interesting times. The global pandemic has reminded us that we really aren't in charge and that we can never fully prepare for what life throws at us. Many of us are struggling with myriad emotions and unexpected challenges as we navigate the uncertainty of life during the time of COVID-19. As Rev. Gy has wisely counseled, "A spiritual practice comes in handy right about now."

Many people find engaging in Mindfulness and other meditation techniques to be particularly valuable both as they work to regulate their emotions and as they provide care and support to others. As psychologist and meditation teacher Tara Brach puts it, "Our calm is contagious."

Fortunately, there are a lot of resources available online to help you stay centered:

Tara Brach offers some great tips about meditation [HERE](#) and shares many guided meditations on her [website](#).

The State of Michigan has put together a special collection of meditation, sleep, and movement exercises that can be found at [Headspace](#).

And UCC member and experienced meditation coach, Eric Nelson has very generously invited us to participate in his weekly **Guided Wellness Meditation on Wednesdays at 5:00 PM** via Zoom. (Visit the [UCC Calendar](#) for login info.) Eric provides background information and answers questions at each session making them great for both beginners and for experienced practitioners.



Rev. Gy will soon be offering a six-session class based on the book *A Chosen Faith*. The class will meet once a week via Zoom. *A Chosen Faith* is an excellent introduction and overview of Unitarian Universalist history, principles and theology written by former Unitarian Universalist Association president, Rev. John A. Buehrens and prominent UU theologian Rev. Forrest Church. *A Chosen Faith* is organized around the six sources: direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces that create and uphold life; words and deeds of prophetic women and men; wisdom from the world's religions; Jewish and Christian teachings; humanist teachings; and spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions. This class is required for anyone considering membership and highly recommended for everyone at UCC. If you are interested in joining this class, please contact Rev. Gy:

gyludvig@gmail.com or 269-352-2412

CARING COMMUNITY



MAY CARING COMMUNITY NEWS

Hello May! Do to our hearts what you do to Earth's flowers!

~Anonymous

Our UCC community has been demonstrating how much we care in so many ways during these extraordinary times. In addition to individual acts, we have maintained contact through the Chalice Circle calls to each of us. We worship together on Sundays on Facebook and have even entertained a wonderful guest speaker, complete with Q and A.

Often, maintaining as much as possible of our familiar routines is comforting when so much of our normal schedule is upended. Thanks to the wonders of Zoom, the board has continued to do our business, the Men's Breakfast Group has continued to meet, as has the Women's Book Group. We have even added some fellowship on Tuesdays at Coffee With Gy and Thursdays at the Happy Hour. Eric Nelson offers a path for peace and coping by leading Wellness Meditation on Wednesdays. We are rich in community.

Some of us have noted that this inconvenient event has somehow provided more opportunity to be quiet, learn more about ourselves, maybe realign values, and vow to be more appreciative of our natural world. Some of us are surprised to be using this time differently that we might have predicted. We are all glad for the resources that help us to be useful, informed, and entertained. We are filled with gratitude that our community remains intact.

We appreciate and hold in our hearts those who continue to work and volunteer outside the safety of their homes. Rev Gy's wife, Patti, is "on the front lines" as an EMT, a sacrifice that they both make to keep others safe. Denise Sonier and Pat Fuehr are nurses providing care to those in hospital and nursing home. Hunter Ridley works in a factory that contributes to the effort to produce more PPE for our frontline workers. Eric Nelson volunteers as an aide for someone with a disability who needs extra help at this time. THANK YOU to all of you! Some of our members sheltering at home have made masks and contributed in many other ways to the common welfare of us all. Caring is also contagious!

We light virtual candles of concern for Erin Michael and her family as they mourn the loss of Erin's mother, Mary Lou Kurtz; for David Bott who was hospitalized recently for respiratory flu and is recovering at home; for Marcia Adams grandson who continues to heal from a serious car accident. We send our thoughts and prayers to all who may be suffering. We know our virtual hugs are not as satisfying as the real thing, but we send them nonetheless.

Celebrations have taken new forms, so perhaps we will hear about the ways in which some special days in May have been marked. Marsha Laya and Joan Young have much to celebrate as they each welcomed a new great-grandchild into the world recently. Another big milestone to note is the 25th anniversary of Denise Sonier and Steve Tasko!! Congratulations - this will be a "unique" celebration to be sure.

(Caring Community News continues on [Page 5](#))

CARING COMMUNITY

Denise Sonier will be celebrating a birthday this month as well. She shares that honor with son Nicholas, also a May baby.

Happy Birthday also to David Brozovich, Jim King, Brian Leekley, Chloe Najar, and Mark Wheeler. May the sun shine and the birds sing for each of you!

We are grateful that technology has allowed us to keep in touch with members and friends from far and wide. Marsha Laya has been zooming into UCC regularly, so it is easy to forget that she joins us from Florida. Marsha is sharing her home with a new kitty. Jim Heveran and Ellouise Barnette send a cheery 'HELLO' from Fairhope, Alabama. Ellie's extra busy with a large vegetable garden, in addition to lots of flowers. Stephanie Grathwol's son Christopher and wife Nicola, Traveling RNs now in Medford, Oregon, are safe and well. They care for post-ICU surgical and cardiac patients. COVID-19 patients are treated in a separate building.

As always, please reach out to share your news or if you have (or know of) a need. Sharing is Caring! UCC Caring Community Contact Persons are: [Nancy Crowell](#), [Judy Oliver](#), or [Judy Pigg-Behrendt](#).



How to Breathe When You Want to Give Up

by Cleo Wade

Today I am breathing

through fatigue, fear and feeling overwhelmed.

I breathe because when I breathe,

I am reminded that I am alive.

I am reminded that to be able to fill my body with air means that I have the ability to keep going.

I am reminded that my time on earth may be short, but it can be powerful if I dedicate it to love and fairness.

When I breathe, I am reminded of Mary Oliver when she wrote:

“tell me what is it you plan to do

with your one wild and precious life?”

So I breathe.

And I let my breath turn into a smile that says back to her:

“as much as I can.”

STEWARDSHIP



The Annual Fund Drive is Complete

The Stewardship Committee is happy to announce the successful wrap-up of our annual fund drive. Despite our inability to hold a celebration dinner and despite economic uncertainties, our congregation responded very generously.

Forty pledge units have promised to donate a total of \$93,975. That is \$4,900 greater than last year and we gained one pledge unit. ('Pledge unit' refers to either an individual or a couple.) Heartfelt gratitude goes out to all of you for your support of our spiritual community. The Board has prepared a budget based on this anticipated income.

We hope to celebrate your generosity with a gala dinner sometime after the pandemic subsides. The UUCC Stewardship Committee is: Chair [Regena Nelson](#), Joe Calme, Ron Crowell, Bev Folz.

Continue Your Financial Giving to UUCC

Many of us are missing out on a regular spiritual practice of financially supporting our church. If you are interested in how you can continue to financially give to the church before services resume, please consider the following options:

1. Mail checks to the church, 10441 Shaver Road, Portage, MI 49024.
2. Use our easy and secure online giving service through Vanco GivePlus in 1 of 2 ways.
 - a. Download the GivePlus Mobile app to your smartphone
 - b. Go to the church website and click "donate"

Below are a bit more instructions on GivePlus that appear in every UUCC emailed announcement. If you would like assistance, please give Kimberly a call at 269-569-3658 and she'll walk you through the steps.

Give to UUCC from your smartphone!

Download the free **GivePlus Mobile** app from Google Play or Apple's App Store. Find **Unitarian Universalist Community Church** and select the one in Portage, Michigan.

OR...

Open a browser, type in the church website, www.uucommunitychurch.org, and click on the "donate" button in the middle of the page.

PROGRAM COUNCIL

Program Council: Where We Get Stuff Done - TOGETHER! (Even When We are Apart!)

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



The next meeting of the UCC Program Council will be held on Sunday, May 17th (as our usual second Sunday date, May 10th is Mother's Day). We will meet via Zoom. Please stay tuned to the Weekly Email for login information.

One of the items on the agenda this month is UU the Vote. The Michigan Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Network is starting to gear up around this issue and looking to provide support for congregations that want to get involved in (COVID-19 safe) voter education and get out the vote activities.

If you have anything you would like put on the agenda for the May Program Council, please send it to Erin Michael.

UU the Vote is a non-partisan faith initiative to engage our neighbors, educate our communities, mobilize voters, and rally around key ballot initiatives. All through 2020 the Unitarian Universalist Association plans to support congregations and UU organizations in activating thousands of Unitarian Universalists to mobilize for electoral justice at the local, state, and national levels. In this political moment, UUs are called to join forces with all people who want to organize our communities and our nation to #VoteLove and #DefeatHate.



MUUSJN

is a statewide network of people, including representatives of Michigan UU congregations and fellowships, who work together for

justice. The Network, established in 2002, takes collective action on a number of justice issues with special focus on LGBT equality, immigration reform, universal health care, poverty, environment, prison reform, and justice in the Middle East.

The Mission of the Michigan UU Social Justice Network is to foster the worth and dignity of people by promoting social justice and community service and to build a community of justice advocates who work together to help make progressive policy changes in our state.

ANNUAL MEETING



Annual Meeting—May 31, 2020 at 11:00 AM

Beginning in March, 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic forced social distancing and the elimination of gatherings that would likely spread the virus. Under the Michigan Executive Order 2020-33, “A state of emergency and a state of disaster are both declared across the State of Michigan.” UUCC closed its building except for essential business and began presenting Sunday services remotely by video on Zoom and Facebook live-streaming.

The Board of Trustees began meeting via Zoom at its April 6 meeting, and the annual congregational meeting planned for May 31 will most likely have to be held virtually as well. The UUA provided guidance for how to do this even though our bylaws state that “There shall be no voting absentee by proxy, by email, by postal mail or by facsimile.” The bylaws also state that “Written notice stating the date, time, location, and agenda of the annual meeting and any special meetings of members shall be distributed (by postal mail, email, or personal delivery) to all members not less than fourteen days before the date of such meetings.” A quorum of 30% of the voting members must be cast for a vote to be valid.

The State of Michigan’s applicable rules for holding virtual meetings are as follows:

“Michigan generally **permits corporations, and nonprofits** to conduct remote and virtual meetings. Remote meetings contingent on an organizations articles of incorporation, charter, bylaws...

(3) Unless otherwise restricted in the articles of incorporation or bylaws, a member of the board or of a committee designated by the board may participate in a meeting by means of conference telephone or other means of remote communication if all individuals who are participating in the meeting can communicate with the other participants. Participation in a meeting under this subsection constitutes attendance in person at the meeting.”

[MI Comp L § 450.2521 \(2019\)](#)

In order for UUCC to conduct its annual congregational meeting and votes, it will open the meeting using the ZOOM video conferencing tool. This allows audio conferencing for those who cannot do video. Options for allowing voting and verification that each vote is cast by a member in good standing will include hand-raising on video or verbally within Zoom.

If you have any questions or concerns about the virtual annual meeting, please feel free to contact Nancy Calme, President, Unitarian Universalist Community Church Board of Trustees.

ANNUAL MEETING

From the Nominating Committee

[Judy Oliver](#) and [Joe Calme](#)

The Nominating Committee is pleased to announce the names of the nominees for the UUCC Board of Trustees. These nominations are for 2-year terms beginning with the 2020-21 church year.

Darby Fetzer
Freya Lake

The Annual Meeting is currently scheduled for **Sunday, May 31, 2020, at 11:00 AM**. At this time, members will elect two nominees to the Board of Trustees. Due to the current coronavirus situation, please watch for announcements regarding any changes to this schedule.

Nominations may be submitted by any member or group of members, two weeks in advance of the annual meeting by furnishing the name of the proposed nominee or nominees, in writing, to the Secretary of the Board of Trustees. Those persons nominated by a member or group of members shall be published and posted not less than two (2) weeks prior to the annual meeting. A member may self-nominate. Nominations will close two (2) weeks prior to the annual meeting and there will be no nominations from the floor.

2020-2021 Budget

During the Annual Meeting on Sunday, May 31st, members will be asked to approve the annual budget. The proposed 2020-2020 budget can be found [HERE](#). Please contact the office if you cannot access this document and we will send it to you via email or USPS. There will be a **Budget Q&A** session with members of the Board of Trustees and the Finance Team on **Sunday, May 3rd** during the Virtual Coffee Hour following the Sunday Service. See the [UUCC Calendar](#) for login information.

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST COMMUNITY CHURCH ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA—May 31, 2020

1. Call to Order & Lighting of the Chalice
2. Quorum Confirmed
3. Welcome - Opening Statement of the President
4. Reading and Approval of the Minutes of the 2019 Annual Meeting
5. Presentation of the Annual Budget and Congregational Vote
6. Presentation of Nominees to the Board of Trustees and Congregational Vote

Nominees: Freya Lake (2 year term)
Darby Fetzer (2 year term)

7. Presentation of the Nominee to the Nominating Committee and Congregational Vote

Nominee: Betty Lee Ongley (2 year term)

8. Other Business
9. Closing - Extinguish the Chalice

FELLOWSHIP AND FUN

Virtual Gatherings Help Us Connect!

Even though our doors are closed, there are many opportunities to meet each and to be together in community. Please consider joining one of the following virtual gatherings. Your presence may be a gift to someone feeling isolated and alone.

Tuesdays at 11:00 AM. Join Rev. Gy for coffee and conversation via ZOOM

Thursdays at 7:00 PM Mingle with friends at our weekly Happy Hour via ZOOM

Sundays at 10:00 AM Join Rev. Gy on Facebook for a live-streamed Sunday Message

Sundays at 10:45 AM Following Rev. Gy's talk, we will gather for a virtual Coffee Hour via ZOOM

How to Connect: Login information for these gatherings can be found in the previous week's Friday Weekly Email and on the [church calendar](#). If you need help connect to Zoom, contact the [office](#).

Service Recordings: Videos of Rev. Gy's Sunday Message can be found on our [Facebook Page](#) and [YouTube Channel](#). You can find us on Facebook and YouTube by searching for UU Community Church of SW Michigan.

Flower Communion

Each year, usually in June, our UU Community Church celebrates Flower Communion, the uniquely Unitarian Universalist celebration of beauty, human uniqueness, diversity, and community. Flower Communion was created by Rev. Norbert Capek and first held in Prague in 1923. You can learn more about the ritual and its originator [HERE](#).

The ongoing COVID-19 health crisis will likely prevent us from celebrating Flower Communion in the usual way, by gathering together to share beautiful flowers found in our yard, by the wayside, or in shops. As with many other parts of our lives at this difficult time, we are challenged to find a new and safe way to hold Flower Communion while still sharing beauty and fostering community.

Although we are not exactly sure what Flower Communion will look like this year, we would like to start preparing for a virtual celebration by collecting photographs of beautiful flowers and our beautiful UUC people too. As May flowers begin to bloom in your yard, your neighborhood, or another place that you love, take a moment to capture pictures of them to share. Please try to get yourself in a photo or two along with the blossoms because the flowers involved in the communion, according to Rev. Capek, are meant to symbolize the personality, spirit, and beauty of a human being, of you. Please send your photos by email to [the office](#) by Wednesday, June 3rd to include them in our virtual Flower Communion. More details about our Flower Communion plans will be in the June Newsletter.



LEARNING AND GROWTH

Women's Book Group

The UCC Women's Book Group selection for May:

Little Fires Everywhere by Celeste Ng.

From [goodreads](#):

*From the bestselling author of **Everything I Never Told You**, a riveting novel that traces the intertwined fates of the picture-perfect Richardson family and the enigmatic mother and daughter who upend their lives.*

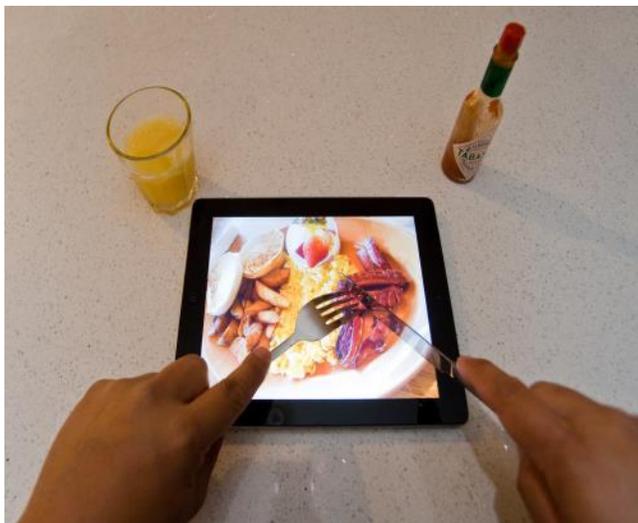
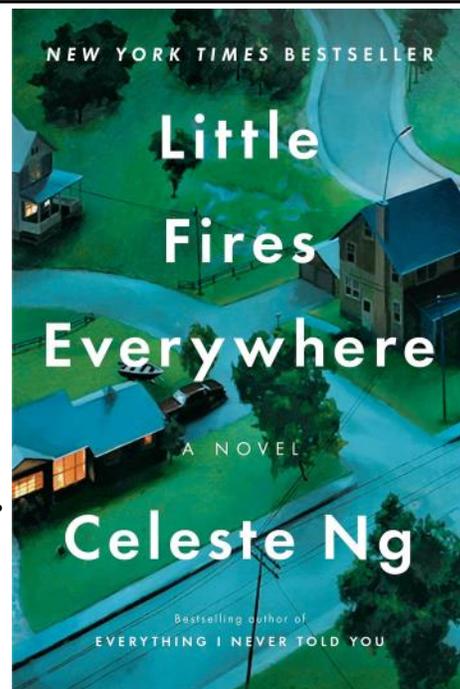
In Shaker Heights, a placid, progressive suburb of Cleveland, everything is planned--from the layout of the winding roads, to the colors of the houses, to the successful lives its residents will go on to lead. And no one embodies this spirit more than Elena Richardson, whose guiding principle is playing by the rules.

Enter Mia Warren--an enigmatic artist and single mother--who arrives in this idyllic bubble with her teenaged daughter Pearl, and rents a house from the Richardsons. Soon Mia and Pearl become more than tenants: all four Richardson children are drawn to the mother-daughter pair. But Mia carries with her a mysterious past and a disregard for the status quo that threatens to upend this carefully ordered community.

Little Fires Everywhere explores the weight of secrets, the nature of art and identity, and the ferocious pull of motherhood--and the danger of believing that following the rules can avert disaster.

Due to Michigan's Stay-at-Home Order, our May 8 discussion may occur online. Discussion Leader Freya Lake has shared some thoughts and questions with the group. Should you be interested in this novel, please contact Stephanie Grathwol at 269-342-0874 or sargg.64@gmail.com

All UCC women (and men) are welcome to participate.



Men's Group Breakfast

Saturday, May 16th at 8:30 AM All are welcome to join the Men's Group for their monthly gathering via ZOOM to enjoy virtual breakfast, companionship, and conversation. Please contact [Ken VanEseltine](#) to let him know you are coming.

<https://zoom.us/j/99078048142?pwd=YWwvMDFibXVMV2I5V2F4TVArS2NzUT09>

Meeting ID: 990 7804 8142 Password: 150735
Full log in info can be found on the [UCC calendar](#).

SUSTAINABILITY

Finding More Joy through a Smaller Environmental Footprint

On April 19th, we were delighted to be joined via Zoom, by sustainability advocate Erin Augustine who shared many ideas with us about how to make simplicity and sustainability the center of our lives. You can learn more about Erin, her family, and their journey towards a smaller environmental footprint on her Facebook page, [Carbon Free Family](#). If you missed her talk you can watch a recording on [YouTube](#).

Erin shared the core set of principles that guides her journey towards a more sustainable life:

- Happiness does not come from stuff
- Individuals have the power to make change
- Everything we bring into our lives eventually becomes garbage
- Zero is not attainable, so the important part is to take joy in the journey

She also shared the 'triple bottom line' that she uses to define success.

She suggests that we evaluate the choices we make based on their impact on:

- The people in our lives
- The planet we live in
- Our personal budget



To measure improvements in her sustainability efforts she uses this [Carbon Footprint Calculator](#) on a yearly basis. She likes this calculator because it provides data by category - Food, Shelter, Mobility, Goods, and Services – and allows her to make specific goals, pinpoint challenges and chart progress.

We were so inspired by Erin Augustine, we have begun exploring the idea of launching a new small group at UU Community Church dedicated to helping individuals and families live more sustainably by setting personal goals, sharing our challenges and successes with each other, keeping each other accountable, and focusing on joy. Keep watching the Weekly Email and future newsletters for more information and contact [Miriam](#) in the office if you have any questions .



Reduce Waste and Spread Joy

Be sure to continue collecting hard plastic caps and lids from milk jugs, medicine bottles, water bottles, energy drinks, toothpaste caps etc. etc.—any cap—any color—any size. Once opening the building is deemed safe, we will have collection box at the ready for you to drop those rescued-from-the-dump items. Freya Lake will be passing all we collect long to another collector at the Portage Senior Center. The caps will ultimately be used in the production of Buddy Benches to be placed in school yards in town. Buddy Benches help spread joy because they are a place that children who feel lonely and left out can sit to find a friend.

SUSTAINABILITY



Sustainability Resources and Ideas

During the Sunday Service on April 19th and the Question and Answer session afterwards the following resources and suggestions were shared:

Purchasing Renewable Energy

[Consumers Energy Solar Garden Program](#)

The direct phone number to sign up for the Consumers Energy Solar Blocks: 866-683-0705.

Cycling Advocacy Groups

[Michigan League of Bicyclists](#)

[The League of American Bicyclists](#)

[Bike Friendly Kalamazoo](#)

Master Plans

[2018 Kalamazoo County Master Plan](#)

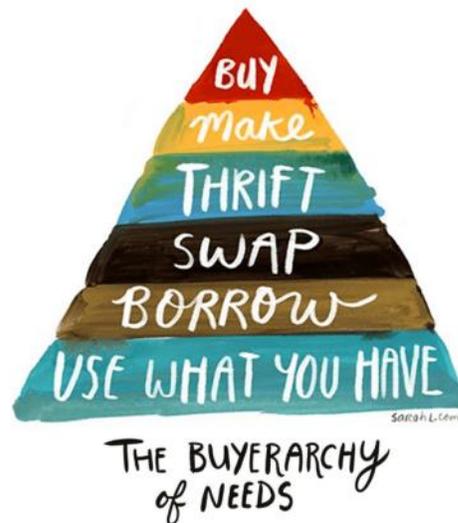
[Imagine Kalamazoo 2025](#)

Waste-Free Shopping Options

[Peoples Food Co-op](#)

[Kalamazoo Farmers Market](#)

[Bee-Joyful Shop](#)



Sustainability Ideas

Plant a Victory Garden or join a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture)

Start a Tool Sharing Community with neighbors and friends

Hold Toy Exchanges with other families with children

Invest in a Ductless Mini Split AC Units

Find ways to barter goods and services with one another

Use a non-motorized or battery powered lawn mower

Ways to readjust your mindset around consumption

Institute a waiting period before buying something new (24 hrs, 1 wk, 1 month?)

Use creativity to solve problems rather than purchasing a solution.

Find things you like to do more than shopping. Cultivate hobbies.



Resources and Ideas for Sustainable Living will become a regular occasional feature in the newsletter. Please send your contributions to:

uccnewsletter@gmail.com. Let's work together to be the change we seek in the world!

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

R.E.flections

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



At a recent Religious Education Meet-Up, the kids and I had a conversation about how this pandemic has changed us. We discovered that we all spend much more time washing our hands and thinking about germs. Some of us even felt a bit germophobic. We have internalized social distancing to the point where seeing people on TV or in films crowded together or hanging on each other makes some of us feel a little uncomfortable. And all of our lives have slowed so much that it has become normal to have days where we accomplish nothing except being. When life returns to 'normal', I like many people, are wondering how many of these changes will we want or need to keep?

Planning for the next phase of life during the time COVID-19 is the subject of many discussions among Unitarian Universalist religious professionals these days. Most everyone agrees that 'normal' is probably not what we should call it. We are weighing the needs of the people in our congregations...the elders, the high risk, the employed, the unemployed, the employees, the families, the children ...and are finding that there does not seem to be a one size fits all way to open the building, return to in-person programming, provide support, and keep everyone safe and well. We also recognize that online church is just not cutting it for some people. What to do? The answers are not clear.

As this congregation works together to chart a course forward in the coming weeks and month, I hope that we center our decisions around our Unitarian Universalist values - our theology, our principles, our sources. What does our shared faith call on us to do in this moment? How can we live our mission to transform ourselves and the world? How will we strive to practice radical hospitality and live up to the words 'All are welcome here'? COVID-19 has created much suffering in the world. How should we respond? How can we continue the work of building Beloved Community centered in justice and equity for all?

For me, the frantic work of creating connection in March and April has shifted to contemplation in May. I believe in this crisis we have an opportunity to move toward a deeper understanding of what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist and grow in faith, together. I wonder what tools and resources I can provide to help us get there? If we use this time wisely, perhaps sometime in the future when we look back at 2020, we will be able to say that the pandemic changed us...for Good.

May it be so.

Online Religious Education

Until regular services resume, our Religious Education classes will meet on Sundays at 1:00 PM via ZOOM video-conferencing. Please contact Miriam for login information.

CALENDAR

MAY 2020

<p>Sunday, May 3 10:00 am - Service on Facebook with Rev. Gy 11:00 am— Virtual Coffee Hour/ Budget Q&A via ZOOM</p>	<p>Monday, May 4 4:00 pm - Board of Trustees Meeting via ZOOM</p>
<p>Sunday, May 10 <i>Mothers Day</i> 10:00 am - Service on Facebook with Rev Gy 11:00 am—Virtual Coffee Hour via ZOOM</p>	<p>Tuesday May 5, 12, 19, 26 11:00 am—Virtual Coffee with Rev.Gy via ZOOM</p>
<p>Sunday, May 17 10:00 am - Service on Facebook with Rev. Gy 11:00 am— Virtual Program Council Meeting</p>	<p>Wednesday, May 6, 13, 20, 27 5:00 pm —Guided Wellness Meditation via ZOOM</p>
<p>Sunday, May 24 10:00 am - Service on Facebook with Rev. Gy 11:00 am—Virtual Coffee Hour via ZOOM</p>	<p>Thursday, May 7, 14, 21, 28 7:00 pm —Virtual Happy Hour via ZOOM</p>
<p>Sunday, May 31 10:00 am - Service on Facebook with Rev. Gy 11:00 am—Annual Meeting via Zoom</p>	<p>Saturday, May 15 8:30 am—Virtual Men’s Group Breakfast via ZOOM</p>

Do you read the Weekly Email?

The weekly email is full of information about UCC that you won't find anywhere else! If you are not getting the Weekly Mail, [visit our website](#) to subscribe.

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



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**The next Newsletter Deadline is
Wednesday, May 20 at NOON**

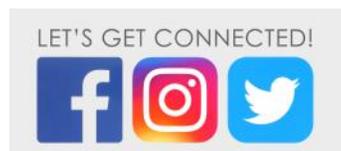
Please send submissions to:

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CommUUnity Matters

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