



CommUUunity Matters

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest Michigan

January 2021

JANUARY SERVICES

Sundays at 10:00 AM via Zoom and [Facebook](#)

January 3: *Imagining a Life*

with J. Barrett Lee

Humans have frequently sought to find meaning in life by repeating platitudes like "Everything happens for a reason!" or "God has a plan!" But what if that isn't true? And what if meaninglessness isn't the only alternative? What if the meaning of life isn't "found" but "made"? Join J. Barrett Lee for a look at the improvisational process of evolution. You are cordially invited to explore the possibilities for making a meaningful life in the midst of so much chaos and beauty.

January 10: *Wisdom*

with Rev. Harold Beu

This will be the last of Harold's trilogy of sermons centering on Reinhold Niebuhr's Serenity Prayer. Wisdom is hard to come by, it seems, there is so little of it in our world, especially among our ruling elite. Harold will humbly offer thoughts on the matter knowing deep down that his access to wisdom too is limited.

December 17: *Restoring the Soul of America*

with guest speaker, Donna Odom

The Polish born American Rabbi Abraham Heschel wrote, "*Racism is man's gravest threat to man.*" Racism is and always has been the gravest threat to America. What are its roots and what can we do to bring about racial healing?

January 24: *Renewing Our Commitment to Justice*

with guest speaker, Wendy Fields

In 1946, eighty-seven culturally diverse residents established the Metropolitan Kalamazoo Branch of the NAACP to mirror the national mission to advocate for equality, civil rights, voter mobilization and monitor equal opportunities for all people in the public and private sector in the greater Kalamazoo area. We'll learn about the history and impact of this organization and how we can support its vision for racial justice.

January 31: *A Message in Music*

with guest artist, Tret Fure

Singer/songwriter Tret Fure will share her heartfelt story songs and meaningful message with us in a music-filled Sunday Celebration.



Our spiritual theme for January:

RENEWAL

In August, we began a year of 'Revolution'. Since then, we have sought ways to broaden our horizons and expand our perspectives. We have been challenged to widen our circle of concern and listen to voices we don't always hear as we seek to be changemakers transforming ourselves and the world.

As we begin a new year, we pause to renew and refresh our minds and spirits and consider how we might reconfigure our priorities going forward.

How will we renew our commitment to carry on the work of those who came before us?

How will we renew our responsibility to those who will come after us?

How can we renew our commitment to one another, to our own spirits, and to the world that so needs us to demand a deeper justice?

GUESTS IN OUR PULPIT

Our Upcoming Guest Speakers:

J. Barrett Lee is a former Presbyterian minister and current Episcopal layperson and Benedictine oblate novice. He lives in Kalamazoo with his spouse Sarah Schmidt-Lee, Pastor of Faith Formation at First Congregational Church, and their children.

At different times in his journey he has worked as a hospital chaplain, parish clergy, a college professor, and a substance abuse counselor.



Donna Odom founded the Society for History and Racial Equity (SHARE) in 2003 as the Southwest Michigan Black Heritage Society. In 2012, she developed the racial healing initiative that expanded SHARE's mission. She recently retired from her position as executive director.

Ms Odom is also a recipient of the YWCA Women of Achievement Award (2018) and was appointed to the Michigan Underground Railroad Commission for 2020.

Wendy Fields, President of Metropolitan Kalamazoo Branch of the NAACP, is lifelong Kalamazoo resident and a Hospice of Kalamazoo of Southwest Michigan board member.

She worked for Kalamazoo County government for 39 years. As a former home visitation advocate for maternal infant health, she worked tirelessly to reduce infant mortality among black mothers.



Tret Fure began her career at the age of 16, singing in coffeehouses and campuses in the Midwest. In addition to being a gifted songwriter, Fure has engineered and produced countless recordings by a variety of artists, including her own work. She has released 17 albums and in a long and varied career she has opened for bands such as Yes, J. Geils, and Poco, won awards, made it to #1 on the Folk charts, and taught guitar and songwriting to individuals and at workshops. In addition she started her own clothing line brand, wrote a cookbook, paints on commission, and was the president of Local 1000 of the Traveling Musicians Union. She is truly a renaissance woman!

CARING COMMUNITY



JANUARY CARING COMMUNITY NEWS

Cheerful words leading off a New York Times story on Tuesday, Dec. 15: *"I honestly can't recall two independent events of such extreme importance occurring on the same day," said one historian. "A good day," said another.*

That day would be Monday, December 14 — when Pfizer's COVID-19 immunizations got under way in the U.S. (vaccine manufactured right here in Portage), and the day the electoral college, without a glitch, officially elected the new President and Vice-president of the United States.

December 14 might be the happy exception among days because, as we start 2021, it's hard to imagine we'll have many fond memories of the awful 2020. Although we've been brought together through ZOOM, our building has been closed since March. Sadly, the corona virus struck several of us connected with UCC, including our own minister, **Rev. Gy**, who describes extreme exhaustion and calls the disease, "relentless." Gy's advice to all: "Don't get COVID." The virus will also keep Rev. Gy from receiving the treatment she needs for a debilitating cerebrospinal fluid leak as Cedars-Sinai in Los Angeles where the surgery was to take place has suspended all but emergency surgery because of Covid19. One of our newest members, **Andy Miller**, was also diagnosed with Covid in early December. He was one of the fortunate ones who only experienced mild symptoms and he was cleared to return to work just before the holidays.

UCC member and retired UU minister **Harold Beu**, subbing for Rev. Gy, used an apt quote from Martin Luther King, Jr. in reference to many events of 2020: "The midnight within the social order."

Harold and his wife Julie had their own midnight-colored experience in December: the death of Julie's niece, Chelsea, a medical doctor in Grand Rapids and mother of Lillian and Oliver, ages five and two. The discovery of her colon cancer coincided with her pregnancy with Oliver. In Harold's words, Chelsea was "brave and bright, with a beautiful smile." Since Chelsea's mother Marcia lives only a block from Harold and Julie in Kalamazoo, the children, especially Lillian, have become more frequent visitors to both homes. Harold and Julie have three grown children but no grandchildren. Harold says he always wanted to be somebody's grandpa and calls the new experience "delightful."

The more easily we can shelter in place, the less we have to worry about. **Kathy Hays**, joining Sunday service from her mobile home park in Florida, said with no hesitation: "I'm not stressed by COVID." **The Calmes** also find it not so bad, living at the farm as they do with plenty of animals for company. **Nancy Calme** is pleased that her December birthday means that she's now eligible for Medicare. "That's the official notice that you're now wise," said **Marsha Laya** (ZOOMing in from Sebring, Florida). "You're not aging, but saging," offered **Erin Michael**.

Please save your get-well cards for **Freya Lake**. Her hip surgery, originally scheduled for mid-December, has been postponed. We'll let you know.

Nancy Crowell said **Ron's** skin cancer spot on his nose has a good prognosis, with pronounced redness and swelling as temporary effects of the treatment. (*Continued on [page 4](#)*)

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

(Caring News continued from [page 3](#)) **Herb Gross's** daughter Gail visited from Wisconsin in December to spend some pre-holiday togetherness with her dad, while **Judy Halseth** used the time away from her care-giving role to spend a few days at her house at Lake Brownwood in PawPaw.

Stace Danielson's youngest son has turned 19, an event that pleases her greatly: "In only one year, I won't have teen-agers!" Many of us know just what she means. We also know that sooner or later nostalgia will kick in for those days of having teen-agers.

Speaking of birthdays, January's candles could shed respectable light on a potluck lunch if we still met in person: **Dick Bott, Nancy Stob, Ron Crowell, Mary King, Amanda Nelson, Judy Oliver, Betty Lee Ongley, Kevin Brozovich, and Jo Cooper.**

And in January we remember with pleasure and sadness two of UUCC's members of the past: **Susie Johnson**, who passed away on Jan. 19, 2006, and **Otto Byers**, Jan. 22, 2015.

As difficult as 2020 was, it was made a little bit easier for many of us because of this support of this church community. Always remember that if you, or someone you know, need support, you can contact one of our point persons: Nancy Crowell 599-1235, Rita Stevens 330-0376, or Judy Oliver 353-9397. Caring is sharing.



For the last several years, we have set aside time in January for the spiritual practice of writing a letter to ourselves. Paper and envelopes would be passed out at a Sunday Service and a time of quiet arranged so everyone could pen a few words to their future self. At the end of the service the envelopes would be collected and kept safe until June when they would be mailed out to the authors.

Covid19, yet again, requires us to rethink the ways we do things but hopefully the New Year tradition of writing a Letter to Self will continue. Letter writing is a deeply reflective action that, when done with mindfulness, can bring profound results. Whether you're hoping to achieve specific goals, following up on gratitude intentions, or giving yourself words of encouragement or affirmation, your future self will appreciate hearing from you.

Consider taking time sometime this month write a letter to yourself. If you want to gather with UUCC members and friends to do this, we will have a **Letter to Self Thoughtful Thursday on January 7 at 7:00 PM.** After your letter is complete, you can set it aside somewhere at home and make plans to open it in June. If you prefer receiving the letter in the mail, stick it in a self-addressed, stamped envelope and mail it to: UUCC Letter to Self, 10441 Shaver Road, Portage, MI 49024. We will mail it back to you at the appropriate time.

QiGong at UUCC

We will begin hosting virtual Qigong classes in January. These classes are free and open to anyone who is interested in learning this ancient Chinese mind-body-spirit practice.

Contact the office at uucommunity@gmail.com for more information.



LEADERSHIP

Board President's Corner

From [Nancy Calme](#)

We're peeking over the hump!

The winter solstice has passed and the days are preparing to stretch a few minutes longer. The new political administration is preparing to take over and restore some sanity and calm. Two new vaccines are being rolled out to protect us from the threat of Covid-19. We will soon begin to see glimmers of the economy recovering as people gradually feel safer to come out of their hidey-holes to spend money and to gratefully recover jobs to support their families.



It's like the promise of spring coming early. I am getting a bit of that Easter feeling.

I hope I am not jinxing it. I am setting my sights on summer for a tentative return to normal life, even though "normal" will not be the same as it was ever before. For now, though, let's wish one another a Happy New Year with hope and enthusiasm. In spite of the suffering and pain of 2020, we learned and grew from the experience. While I'm happy to see it in the rear-view mirror, 2020 was far from the same-old-same-old and there was some value in that.



Program Council—Where We Get Stuff Done!

From [Erin Michael](#), Program Council Chair

Program Council is CELEBRATING!

From July 1 to December 13, we celebrated 52 positive opportunities we either created or in which we have been involved! Despite the pandemic, the struggles of our society and individual challenges, WE GET THINGS DONE! I am pumped! Each month, I am amazed at our resilience, our compassion, our energy to move forward and find positive ways to engage, care for and support each other and our community. It has been an amazing six months, and I thank you for traveling the road of life together. I am feeling loved and lucky to know you all!

As we near the start of 2021, I am choosing to be encouraged and uplifted by all that you are stepping up to and leaning into – being brave as we learn to conquer our implicit bias, sense of aloneness, size of carbon footprints, fears of technology, and what the future holds. And I have seen a sense of vulnerability as we all seem to be moving to more honest and open conversations. I am deeply grateful to be a part of this community and hope that you continue to join in our Program Council work each second Sunday of the month at 11:00 AM.

For complete details on our December 13 meeting check out the notes [HERE](#). Our next meeting is **Sunday, January 10 at 11:00 AM via Zoom**. I am looking forward to seeing you and working with you to continue our efforts to positively transform ourselves and our world! In the famous words of Gandhi, *Be the change you wish to see*.

STEWARDSHIP



February FUNraiser

Please save the date for the

BINGO NIGHT

Saturday, February 13, 2021

6:30 PM

There will be prizes to celebrate Valentine's Day

Our winter UCC fundraiser is a **Valentine's Bingo Night** on Zoom. We will also sell raffle tickets for the 50/50 raffle. Everyone is invited to this event. Please invite your friends and family to join us.

We have some fabulous Valentine's Day prizes for the bingo winners to be delivered on February 14:

- ♥ Ron Crowell's wine and chocolates from *Confections with Convictions*
- ♥ Joe Calme's cherry liqueur and a *Victorian Bakery* treat
- ♥ Marsha Laya's hand-knitted socks and a *Kalamazoo Candle Company* candle
- ♥ Marsha's handmade red dish towels and dish soap from *Bee Joyful*
- ♥ \$50 cash prize

To play, order four (4) Bingo cards for \$20 by emailing Joe Calme at joe.calme@gmail.com by **January 31, 2021**. You can purchase an additional set of four (4) cards for \$10, if you and your partner want to play 8 cards total. You can also order your raffle tickets for \$1 each. We recommend buying 5 raffle tickets. To increase your chances of winning, you will play 4 cards at a time like the experts do. You will use the same cards for each round.

Joe will confirm your order and send you directions for payment. You will receive your bingo cards and raffle tickets in the mail by February 10. The Zoom link will be emailed to you prior to the event.

On February 13, plan to wear red and come ready to have a fun night with UCC Bingo Caller Kevin Brozovich.

If you have any questions about our Valentine's FUN-raiser contact a member of the Stewardship Committee: Regena Nelson, Joe Calme, Ron Crowell, and Marsha Laya.



LEARNING AND GROWTH

Thoughtful Thursdays

Each Thursday evening there are opportunities to gather with UU Community Church members and friends for programs and discussions about some of the big questions in life. We hope you will take advantage of the opportunities for learning and growth these programs offer.



First Thursdays—THEMATIC EXPLORATION

The first Thursday of each month will be dedicated to an exploration of the current spiritual theme. On **January 7 at 7:00 PM** we will engage in the renewing personal spiritual practice of writing a letter to our future selves. You can read more about this on [page 4](#).

Second Thursdays—MORAL DECISION MAKING

The second Thursday of the month will feature a short lecture and a group discussion of thorny ethical questions. The topic for exploration on **January 14 at 7:00 PM** is *Whistle Blowers*. Details are on [page 8](#).

Third Thursday —A CONVERSATION WITH....

Once a month we continue to invite special guests to join us and engage in conversation and answer our questions on a variety of topics. We are excited to be joined by Sara Vogel (see below) on **January 21 at 7:00 PM**. Save the date and plan to join in the conversation.

Other Thursdays—ASSORTED PROGRAMMING

On the remaining Thursdays we will present a variety of programming and activities. On **January 28 at 7:00 PM** we will hold our first ever **Theatrical Thursday**. Details are on [page 9](#).



A Conversation with Sara Beaver Vogel Portage Mom and Black Lives Matter Advocate

Have you noticed the BLM Peaceful Protest near the City Hall in Portage during the noon hour? **Sara Vogel** is one of the founders and leaders of the group.

Since June, involved Portage residents have been supporting the Black Lives Matter community every day for 175 days. After Thanksgiving and considering the upcoming winter, the group now advocates for ending racism on Wednesdays and Sundays 12-1 PM. It is the Portage Kids Peaceful Protest that includes children, families, and friends of any age in the Portage area. Kimberly Ridley joined this group on the corner of Westnedge and Centre (across from Chicken Coop) in early November and was happy to find in-person, but physically distanced, community again.

Sara Beaver Vogel was born and raised in Portage and her parents and sister still live in the area - which is why she moved back in 2015. Sara is a graduate of Hope College and Western Theological Seminary. While she's also an ordained minister in the Reformed Church in America, the last few years her ministry has been as a stay at home mom. Sara has three children, ages 6 to 12. Now that school is virtual, most days she's juggling the demands of whatever needs to be done most urgently.

Join us on **January 21 at 7:00 PM** to be inspired in how we might move from concerned citizen to engaged citizen. Learn and develop ideas to prioritize action on our values and the nerve to find ways to do that. Leaders are needed and so are supporters.

LEARNING AND GROWTH



Open House Theatre Company

Did you know that a theater company makes its home at UU Community Church? Co-founded by UUC member Mary Roscoe and our Music Director, Nick Sienkiewicz, Open House Theatre Company believes that the arts are for everyone!

Open House Theatre Company held their inaugural production, *Our Town*, at our building in October of 2019 and were actively planning new and engaging events for spring of 2020 when the pandemic hit. Despite the challenges they continue to work to find ways to bring inclusive theatre to our community.

They are delighted to share that the 60th District Service Office of Representative Jon Hoadley recently announced, "We are pleased to be supporting Open House Theatre Company with a \$500 donation. They are dedicated to providing an accessible, educational, and inclusive theatrical experience regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion or economic status."

Open House Theatre Company is grateful for this donation toward their upcoming project, *Pen and Feather Teen Writers Festival*. They hope that this project will help showcase artistic writings of young people from Kalamazoo, Portage, and beyond. Watch for more information in upcoming monthly newsletters to learn how you can support and participate in this exciting event!



You can learn more about Open House Theatre Company at their [website](#) and [Facebook page](#) or by contacting [Mary Roscoe](#) or [Nick Sienkiewicz](#).

Civil Conversations Small Group

The first meeting of the Civil Conversations Small Group will be on **Tuesday, January 12 at 7:00 PM**. Click [HERE](#) for the Zoom login.

Anyone interested in practicing emotional intelligence skills and intentionally working to build bridges towards greater understanding in the world is welcome to join this small group. It is not necessary for you to have attended the previous Civil Conversations workshop.

If you have any questions about this small group, contact [Darby Fetzer](#).



The Ethics of Whistleblowing

Put yourself in the shoes of a company employee who knows his friend is doing something unethical. Would you rat out your friend for the sake of the business? Should you?

At our next **Moral Decision Making Thoughtful Thursday on January 14 at 7:00 PM**, we will explore the mechanism of dissent, the nature of loyalty, and the courage it takes to stand up for one's principles as we consider the ethics of whistleblowing.

All are welcome to attend this adult enrichment opportunity. There is no need to register. Each session is a stand alone program. You can even bring a friend!



CONNECTION

Women's Book Group

[Stephanie Grathwol](#), Chair

January Selection:

***Humankind: A Hopeful History* by Rutger Bregman**

Friday, January 8 at 1:00 PM

Book discussion via Zoom

[https://zoom.us/j/99607835644?](https://zoom.us/j/99607835644?pwd=b2V0QkM4MC9lMDQwR0pldVFkdWlvUT09)

[pwd=b2V0QkM4MC9lMDQwR0pldVFkdWlvUT09](https://zoom.us/j/99607835644?pwd=b2V0QkM4MC9lMDQwR0pldVFkdWlvUT09)

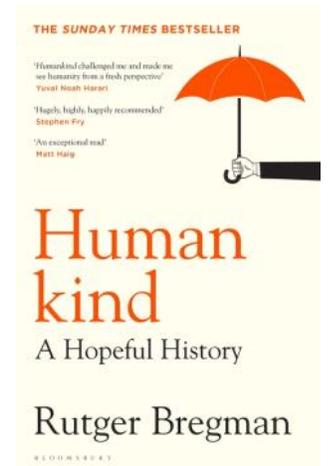
From Goodreads:

With Humankind, Rutger Bregman examines one of our most entrenched ideas: namely, that human beings are by nature selfish and self-interested.

By providing a new historical perspective of the last 200,000 years of human history, Bregman sets out to prove that we are in fact evolutionarily wired for cooperation rather than competition, and that our instinct to trust each other has a firm evolutionary basis going back to the beginning of Homo sapiens.

The Women's Book Club starts with a short business meeting followed by the book discussion led, this month, by Rita Stevens. All are welcome!

Please contact Stephanie (sargg.64@gmail.com) for more information.



Men's Group Breakfast

Saturday, January 16 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](#) with your questions or to let him know you are coming.

[https://zoom.us/j/97856246726?](https://zoom.us/j/97856246726?pwd=WTlQaG1qZ3liZERFQmpkdXhqYVhoZz09)

[pwd=WTlQaG1qZ3liZERFQmpkdXhqYVhoZz09](https://zoom.us/j/97856246726?pwd=WTlQaG1qZ3liZERFQmpkdXhqYVhoZz09)

Meeting ID: 978 5624 6726

Password: 749176



Full log in info can be found on the [UUCC Calendar](#).



Theatrical Thursday

Our Thoughtful Thursday on **January 28 at 7:00 PM** will be an 'open mike'

night. UUCC members and friends are welcome to step up on the virtual Zoom stage to share poetry, readings, monologues, jokes, or even sing a song. If you are not sure about performing live, you can submit a video recording instead.

Joe and Nancy Calme have already reserved a spot in the Theatrical Thursday line up to read a scene from *On Golden Pond*.

Additional performers would be delightful but appreciative and supportive audience members are essential too. Plan to join us for our first (and perhaps only) Theatrical Thursday for fun, fellowship, and heartfelt entertainment.

Click [HERE](#) for the Zoom login for Theatrical Thursday.

SUSTAINABILITY



Finding More Joy Through a Smaller Environmental Footprints

On November 21, the UCC Sustainability Small Group met to share our successes and failures as we work towards a more simple and sustainable lifestyle. We also shared ideas and strategies for keeping our holiday celebrations earth-friendly.

Ideas for locally produced or previously loved gifts:

[Boomerang for the Home](#), 6022 S. Westnedge Ave. in Portage, has gently used, quality furniture and home décor.

[Heilman's](#) nuts and candies and Bagel Beanery's (812 S. Westnedge) bagel chips make great, locally produced gifts that can easily be shipped to friends and family around the country.

Ideas for homemade gifts:

Scrapbooks filled with family stories, memories, and photos make a priceless gift for children and grandchildren.

If you have a few extra cherries, consider making a batch of vișinată, a Romanian alcoholic beverage produced from sour cherries, sugar and alcohol. It is very flavorful and sweet, and makes a great holiday gift.

Ideas for experience based gifts:

For puzzle loving friends, [Dear Holmes](#) is a company that will mail a with a Victorian-themed mystery for you to solve to the your door each month.

[ClueQuest](#) has at-home Escape Room packages that are challenging, fun, and Covid safe.

For animal loving friends, there is [Animal Adoption from the Kalamazoo Nature Center](#). Recipients are sent pictures and updates about their animal and can arrange an in-person one-on-one visit.

Making a donation in someone's name makes a great gift. A bee loving friend might appreciate support for www.detroitives.org, an organization working to transform vacant lots in Detroit into pollinator friendly habitat.

Ideas for sustainable gift wrapping:

[Carbon Free Family](#) has instructions for how to make [reusable cotton gift bags](#).

Earth 911 also some great [Strategies for Waste Free Wrapping](#)

Other resources shared:

David Perlmutter, author of *Brain Wash: Detox Your Mind for Clearer Thinking, Deeper Relationships, and Lasting Happiness*, is holding a [#BrainWash2021Challenge](#). (The challenge includes eating more plant-based meals, a goal that many of our group members are working on.)

Our next meeting on **Monday, January 25 at 7:00 PM** via Zoom will be a great time for new people to join. We will be renewing our commitment to sustainability by sharing our goals for 2021. You can get started on your sustainability goals by using the [Carbon Footprint Calculator](#) and our [Goals Worksheet](#).

For more information about the UCC Sustainability Small Group, contact [Miriam](#).

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION



Freya's Cap Update

Many thanks to the conscientious UCC friends who have donated another 13 pounds—POUNDS— of plastic caps to the Buddy Benches project!

Keep up your good work! Please continue to collect any kind of hard plastic bottle caps, all sizes and shapes and colors from toothpaste cap size to 'whatever'. Freya Lake will accept caps at her doorstep any time you pass near her condo OR contact her for pick-up at your place or convenient rendezvous.

R.E.flections From [Miriam Epskamp](#), Director of Religious Education

Recently I shared this passage from ***This Book is Anti-Racist*** by Tiffany Jewel with the kids in our Youth Group:

Use your privilege and your proximity to the center of the dominant culture box to fracture the very foundation of our racist society. If you keep doing this and continue to put more cracks and dents into the structure, you will shake it up so it can crumble.



I asked the kids if they believed what Tiffany Jewel claimed. Could we, little by little, strike enough blows to destroy white supremacy culture in this country? Every kid answered, "Yes!" They confidently believed this could be done. My heart soared! Our young people know that they can be the change they wish to see in the world!

Naturally, my next question for them was, "What are YOU going to do fracture the foundation of our racist society?!" Every kid answered, "I don't know." Hmm.... I guess we still have some work to do.

Part of that work is reminding the kids that they each have important gifts that they bring to the struggle. They don't necessarily have to be grand gestures like giving speeches or attending protests or disrupting police brutality. Having one-on-one conversations with family and friends makes a dent. Writing a letter to an elected official or the school newspaper makes a crack. Helping organizations doing anti-racist work with unglamorous chores like taking out the trash, filing papers, or making lunch helps chip away at the foundations. Our job as changemakers is to find where our gifts best fit and put our energy there.

Part of the work is letting the kids know that we are in this struggle for the long haul. Racism has wormed its way into the very fabric of our society. Getting rid of it will not be easy. We will need to learn to pace ourselves, step back and rest when we need to, then come back renewed and determined to fight another day.

Part of the work is providing a supportive community that will be here for our kids when the going gets tough. A community that reminds them of their value and worth and inspires them to keep trying to make a difference.

I look forward to working with the kids (and you) in 2021 as we work to grind away white supremacy! May it be so.

ONLINE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: Until regular services resume, our children and youth will meet on Sundays at 1:00 PM via ZOOM video-conferencing. Please contact [Miriam](#) for login information.

FAITH IN ACTION

Congolese Family Update

Just before Christmas, UUCC volunteers dropped off a big pile of gifts to our Congolese friends. They included a few toys, clothes, home goods, and gift cards. 2020 has been such an incredibly tough year for everyone. It felt good to be able to spread some cheer.

Many thanks to Congolese Family Team members Denise Sonier, Darby Fetzer, Regena Nelson, Pat Timm, Pat Fuehr, and Stephanie Grathwol for purchasing and wrapping gifts. Thank you also to everyone who made a donation to the Congolese Family Fund to help pay for presents and for any future expenses that may come up. Acts of kindness, caring, and generosity such as these are one way this church puts its UU faith in to action.



January Generosity Sunday

Our Generosity Sunday organization in January is Face Off Theatre Company (FOTC). Join our service, Sunday, January 10 to learn more about FOTC.

Face Off Theatre Company was founded by 6 Black women who are all graduates of Western Michigan University's Theatre and Creative Writing programs. The original intent of the company was to provide acting, directing, and producing opportunities to artists of color in Kalamazoo. Face Off Theatre Company and the Black Arts & Cultural Center officially created a partnership in 2015 to provide the Kalamazoo community with innovative and diverse theatre all year round, as well as, quality community events and workshops. Since then, Face Off Theatre has evolved into the mission of creating meaningful work that inspires and sparks change in our community and provide a safe space that develops and supports artists of color.

During the pandemic, FOTC pivoted to online programming and opportunities. They have:

1. Hosted a workshop for artists of color about Arts and Activism.
2. Curated and hosted a panel of local community leaders and advocates to speak about the Black Lives Matter Movement in Kalamazoo.
3. Produced a night of poetry, song, and theatre via Facebook Live.
4. Collaborated with Farmers Alley Theatre for an outdoor production of Three Little Birds, a musical for children inspired by the music and lyrics of Bob Marley.

We are collecting donations for Generosity Sunday for the entire month of January, you may give by mailing a check payable to UUCC with "Generosity Sunday" in the memo line OR Give electronically using Give Plus and select "Generosity Sunday Donation"

SOCIAL JUSTICE

UU the VOTE

Join the UU Poor People's Campaign Leadership Council and UUs for Social Justice in the final UU phonebank before the runoff election in Georgia on January 5.

On **Sunday, January 3 at 4:00 PM** you can learn how to increase the turnout among voters of color in Georgia using a new calling platform from Reclaim Our Vote. This platform allows you to make calls from your phone or from your computer.

All training will be included in the event, but help links will be provided for you to review in advance. Click [HERE](#) to sign up to help expand democracy and promote justice for all.



Upcoming Anti-Racism Trainings:

Jubilee Three Anti-Racism Training

The Central East Region of the UUA in partnership with several UU congregations is offering a 2½ day online workshop from **January 15-17**, open to anyone who wants to journey toward making a stand against racism. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

Before We Were White

Click [HERE](#) for information about this six-week program from White Awake that will help white people foster an understanding of white supremacy, capitalism, settler-colonialism, as well as build resilience, an integrated sense of self, and a stronger sense of purpose in your work for collective liberation.



From the UUA: *Martin Luther King's inspiring words and actions remind Americans everywhere to work for racial, economic, and international justice. As Unitarian Universalists, we have the religious grounding, the resources, and the opportunity to make a difference in partnership with those who are most affected by systemic racism.*

Martin Luther King Day on Monday, January 18 offers an opportunity to re-affirm and renew our commitment to racial justice. Consider taking time on Martin Luther King Day to take part in events planned by these local groups:

Western Michigan University

WMU in partnership with the Northside Ministerial Alliance and other organizations work collaboratively each year to establish a celebration for Kalamazoo residents that highlights and captures the essence of the life and legacy of Dr. King. This year's theme is ***None of Us is Free Until All of Us is Free***. The pandemic will prevent many of the usual activities from taking place but look for Covid-safe and virtual events to be posted [HERE](#) in the coming weeks.

Gryphon Place Day of Service

In recognition of Dr. King's incredible legacy of service to all, Congress designated the Martin Luther King Jr. Federal Holiday as a national day of service in 1994. Gryphon Place encourages individuals to use their day off from work on MLK Day to volunteer with local organizations. You can check out their list of volunteer opportunities [HERE](#).

Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT)

The Tuesday following Martin Luther King Day, is a National Day of Racial Healing. See [page 14](#) for a full schedule of programs devoted to Resistance and Healing presented by TRHT Kalamazoo.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

5th Annual

NATIONAL DAY OF

RACIAL HEALING

Resistance & Healing

TRuTH Talk: Racial Healing

1/7/2021 @ 4:00 PM - 5:30 PM

Watch live on Facebook, Youtube & Public Media Network as we discuss racial healing.

National Day of Racial Healing: Twitter Chat

1/14/2021 @ 4:00 PM - 5:30 PM

Get a sneak peak of the main event, Healing & Resistance, by interacting with the panelists, suggesting topics and questions.

Virtual Healing Experience with fellow community members

1/18/2021 @ 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM

Experience a VHE with fellow community members. Be sure to RSVP by 1/13/2021. Space is limited.

Opening Reception ****

1/19/2021 @ 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Virtually mix and mingle with the TRHT Kalamazoo community before the main event!

National Day of Racial Healing Celebration ****

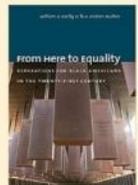
1/19/2021 @ 5:00 PM - 7:30 PM

Celebrate resistance and healing by joining the live stream on our Facebook Youtube & Public Media Network pages. We will hear community voices and local artists that have exemplified healing and resistance in 2020.

From Here to Equality: Community Read

1/21/2021 @ 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM

Join a discussion of the book, "From Here to Equality: Reparations for Black Americans in the Twenty-First Century". The first 20 people registered can receive a free copy of the book.



For more information and to register visit TRHTKzoo.org



TRHTKalamazoo



CALENDAR



JANUARY 2021

Sunday, January 3

10:00 am— Improvising a Life with J. Barrett Lee
10:45 am—After Service Coffee Hour
1:00 pm—Meet-Up for Youth

Tuesday, January 12

7:00 pm - Civil Conversations Small Group

Sunday, January 10

10:00 am— Wisdom with Rev. Harold Beu
10:45 am—After Service Coffee Hour
11:00 am—Program Council Meeting
1:00 pm— Meet Up for Youth

Wednesday, January 6

5:30 pm—Board of Trustees Meeting

Wednesday, January 13

5:30 pm –Sunday Services Meeting

Wednesday, January 27

12:00 pm—NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

Sunday, January 17

10:00 am—Restoring the Soul of America with Donna Odom
10:45 am—After Service Coffee Hour
1:00 pm—Meet-Up for Youth

Thursday, January 7

1:00 pm—Stewardship Committee Meeting
7:00 pm—Thoughtful Thursday—Letter to Self

Thursday, January 14

7:00 pm—Moral Decision Making Lecture and Discussion

Thursday, January 21

7:00 pm—A Conversation with Sara Beaver Vogel

Sunday, January 31

10:00 am—A Message in Music with Tret Fure
10:45 am—After Service Coffee Hour
1:00 pm—Meet Up for Kids

Thursday, January 28

5:00 pm—Theatrical Thursday

Monday, January 25

7:00 pm—Sustainability Small Group

Friday, January 8

1:00 pm—Women’s Book Group

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

Saturday, January 16

8:30 am—Men’s Group Virtual Breakfast



Close Captioning for Sunday Services

Zoom has added a live transcript feature to meetings that provides automatically generated captions as people speak. Captioning is very beneficial for people with hearing impairments and will help make our Sunday Services more accessible to all.

As with all computer generated captioning, there will be occasional errors, especially if the speaker is talking quickly or not enunciating clearly, but for those who struggle to understand what is being said, the benefits of captions outweigh the imperfections. In addition, the captions can be turned off by users who find them too distracting. Look for the CC icon at the bottom of your Zoom screen and chose ‘Hide Transcript’. You can also choose to view the transcripts in the chat box or change the size of the font. Starting on January 3 we will begin enabling the live transcript during services. If you have any questions, please contact Miriam.

**UU Community Church
is served by:**

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

Miriam Epskamp
Office Administrator and
Director of Religious Education
uucommunity@gmail.com
Church office: 269-324-7262
Cell phone: 269-993-8758

Nick Sienkiewicz
Music Director
nsienki@iu.edu

2020-2021 Board of Trustees

Nancy Calme

Erin Michael

Darby Fetzer

Larry Higgins

Freya Lake

**The next Newsletter Deadline is
Wednesday, January 27 at NOON**

Please send submissions to:
uuccnewsletter@gmail.com

CommUUnity Matters

**Unitarian Universalist Community Church
of Southwest Michigan**

10441 Shaver Rd.
Portage, MI 49024
269-324-7262



uucommunity@gmail.com
www.uucommunitychurch.org
www.facebook.com/uuccswmi
twitter.com/uuccswmi
www.instagram.com/uuccswmi/



**SPIRITUALITY FOR
DIVERSE PATHS**

BLACK LIVES MATTER