



# CommUUunity Matters

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest Michigan

February 2021

## **FEBRUARY SERVICES**

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

### **February 7: *Embracing Diversity* with Rev. Gy**

The human quest for belonging can sometimes lead us to 'ideological bunkers' where we start dividing the world into 'us' versus 'them'. This dichotomy destroys our empathy and honesty. Learning to look past labels with an open heart and an open mind will help us embrace otherness and difference.

### **February 14: *Put Some Love in the World* with Rev. Gy**

On this day dedicated to Love and relationships, Rev. Gy invites you to love on a cause that is close to your heart. Let Love lead you in choosing the cause and give it a good chunk of your attention today. Who knows, it may grow into a long term relationship!

### **February 21: *Why, How, Where?* with Rev. Gy**

Why are we here?  
How are we supposed to live?  
Where do we go from here?

### **February 28: *Justice: Jurors Required* with Kimberly Ridley**

There are two elements that are sacred and necessary to democracy -liberty and justice. We all know and frequently hear about voting, but juries are also foundational to our democracy (see Article III, Section 2, and the 6th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution). The legal system doesn't do justice; people do. Jurors have a lot to say and are impacted by their service. Serving on a jury relates to most of our 7 UU principles; can you help others look at it with a fresh perspective? With support from congregation members, today, we will lift up jury duty.



## **ENGAGEMENT**

### **Our spiritual theme for January: ENGAGEMENT**

Unitarian Universalism is a faith that requires something of us. Implicit in our principles and purposes is action and activism. How can there be more dignity, equity, compassion, liberty, and justice in the world unless we take steps to make it so? This commitment to social justice is what draws many people to our communities. Positively transforming the world is a life long undertaking. How will you stay engaged?

- Some are peacefully protesting in the streets.***
- Some are donating silently.***
- Some are educating themselves***
- Some are having tough conversations  
With family and friends.***
- A Revolution has many lanes.***
- Be kind to yourself and to others***
- Who are traveling in the same direction.***

***Just keep your foot on the gas.***

- Author Unknown

# FROM THE MINISTER

## From the Minister

[Rev. Gy Ludvig-McCartney](#)



Muriel Rukeyser said that the Universe is made of stories, not of atoms. Here is mine.

Coming out is a muddled process for many because it touches on primal fears of rejection, isolation, and ridicule. Rejection is hard enough when it comes from one's peers, let alone when it involves one's nuclear family. As the mind would have it, the potential of the worst possible outcome is magnified and who in their right mind would want to bring that upon themselves?

I waited 24 years to come out to my family even though I knew all my life that I was different. I did not, however, want to risk being disowned, humiliated, rejected. So, I pretended to be someone I was not.

Coming out was hard. I remember the very first time I said the words "I am gay", I could literally hear the air around me. It's as though everything came to a screeching halt and I just waited for the entire world to come crashing down on me. It did not.

I've heard some say that reality is a whole lot nicer than our worse imagination. Not so with my mother and older sister. I am not sure what kind of bad I expected, but what I got was worse than I could have imagined. I know now that they were doing the best they could and I am sure that if they could have done better they would have. Nonetheless, much was done and said that left significant damage. It takes so much less time to ruin a relationship than to heal it.

Coming out is a process. First I came out to a couple of friends. Initially, that was okay, but in the end, our friendship didn't survive my revelation. As a matter of fact, of all the friends I had back when I first came out, only one of them remains in my life to this day. The others chose their version of Christianity that had no room for someone like me.

Coming out is a slow process. A few friends and family first, then pause. Long, long pause. I was scared to come out in professional circles. I didn't want to get fired, I wanted approval. Looking back I see how ridiculous it was of me to expect to have authentic relationships while hiding an important part of me. Hindsight is 20/20 as they say and I was so caught up in my own thoughts that I couldn't choose a different path. All that time I was afraid of others rejecting me while the entire time I was rejecting me!

Eventually, I came to embrace myself and that was gradual, too. I became less and less apologetic about who I am, I grew legs underneath me, so to speak. I found my voice and felt more at home within myself and the world. Occasionally I would still find myself in circles where owning myself seemed risky, but I did it anyway.

So, there came a time when I thought, that's it, I'm done. I've come out to everyone I care about, I am living an authentic life, this part of my life is squared away.

Not so fast!

*(Continued on page 3)*

# INSPIRED SPIRITUALITY

(Continued from page 2) Living life in English created a new problem for me. You see, in Hungarian, there are no gender-specific pronouns. In English, however, there is the pesky “he” and “she”. Well, if I am to be completely honest and authentic, I must admit that I don’t identify with either. I don’t identify with “he”, well, because I am not. I don’t identify with “she”, because I just don’t. What a conundrum!

Turns out I am not the only one in the world with this “problem”. In fact, there are many like me and the solution is to address ourselves as “they/them”.

Once I decided that this is a more authentic way for me, I asked Miriam to please change the pronouns on our website to “they/them”. And you know what? I felt the same insecurities surface that I felt many decades ago when I first came out. I relived the same fear of rejection, and ridicule I felt so many years ago. Miriam, dear Miriam, was gracious, understanding, and completely supportive.

So, coming out is ongoing.

Coming out has a ripple effect. It doesn’t just affect me, it affects everyone else I come in contact with. My family also had to “come out” with me and it was hard for them. Some of them still haven’t been able to. It also affects my friends, and it also affects all of YOU. I am present to that and I want to make the landing soft.

We are always in the process of becoming. Our paths are different, but we are all evolving, becoming. The other day our guest speaker was Wendy Fields, President of the Kalamazoo branch of the NAACP. When I asked her if she could change one thing for better and for good in our community, what would it be, she said, “I’d want people to have an open mind.” It was one of those ‘King Solomon’ kind of answers. God was willing to grant him anything and he asked for wisdom. Wendy Fields wishes for an open mind. Everything can be tackled, solved, embraced, and yes, healed when having an open mind.

Here’s to open minds, warm hearts, and constant becoming.



General Assembly (GA) is the annual meeting of our Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). Participants worship, witness, learn, connect, and make policy for the Association through democratic processes. Anyone may attend.

Registration is now open for GA 2021– [Circle 'Round for Justice, Healing, Courage](#). This GA will be 100% virtual. Financial support for registration is available through the UUA on a first come first serve basis. UUCC may have funds available to help offset the cost as well. Reach out to a board member for more information.

# CARING COMMUNITY



## FEBRUARY CARING COMMUNITY NEWS

*One of the most important things you can do on this earth  
is to let people know they are not alone.*

~Shannon L. Adler

Pfizer manufactures its COVID-19 vaccine right here in Portage, five miles from UUCC's front door, but that doesn't mean we can get our shots right away. A few in the currently eligible brackets have succeeded, though, including former Portage mayor Betty Lee Ongley (one of the ways she celebrated her 95th birthday). Others we've heard about: Beverly and John Folz, Marcia Adams, Nancy Stob, Pat Fuehr, Joe Calme, Denise Sonier, Judy Halseth, and Herb Gross. Second shots are scheduled for February. Eligible and eager but still unvaccinated are Judy Oliver, Barb and Dick Bott, Rita Stevens, Joan Young, Ken Van Eseltine, Stephanie Grathwol, David Senecal and Freya Lake. Both lists are probably much longer.

A Michigan Radio online forum this week tried to put vaccine uncertainty in perspective. Two University of Michigan doctors said the problem is "unpredictability of vaccine availability" and advised that "The key is patience." Patience is indeed a virtue and so is gratitude — that vaccines for a new virus were developed in record time. We'll all get our arm pokes eventually. Meanwhile: STAY SAFE.

Beverly and John Folz received their shots during a COVID clinic held at The Fountains. After the residents had received their vaccine, enough remained for an additional dose — and the lucky recipient was John's aide, who comes in for two hours, three days a week, and who happened to be there at the right time. Now every person who comes into their apartment has been vaccinated, including John's hospice nurse.



Elizabeth Fernandez

UUCC lost one of its founders, Elizabeth Fernandez, on January 14, 2021. Freya Lake knew her well, and writes:

*Elizabeth and I met at UUCC about 17 years ago and we found that our mutual interest and love of classical music was an instant bond. I was in awe of her far-reaching knowledge and tastes in music. She was much more open-minded and accepting of various forms of music than I. Through the years we attended many concerts together, several times in her hometown of Chicago — I as her grateful guest. In that city, we also found time to satisfy our curiosity about the natural and cultural world by attending premiers of museum exhibits. It helped that we were of the same persuasion on most big-issues-of-the-day, but I marveled at her ability to sincerely keep an open mind and heart to all people whom she met and engaged in conversation. She was such an intelligent, informed person, a realist — yet so filled with compassion for flora, fauna, and humans. We took some great trips together, sharing the excitement, wonder, and pleasure of visiting other cultures in Alaska, Mexico (twice), and Russia. I miss my friend and cherish our talks: her patient listening skills, sympathetic response, and astute observation abilities.*

(More on page 5)

# CARING COMMUNITY

*(Continued from page 4)* We also remember with fondness another long-time member, Barbara Cousins, who passed away February 11, 2009.

Happy February birthday wishes go to Hunter Ridley, Marsha Laya, Bev Folz, Regena Nelson, and Joe Calme. We hope celebrations ensue despite the pandemic.

COVID postponements have become a way of life. Ken VanEseltine's family will celebrate Christmas on July 29. Ken spent some of his 2020 pandemic down-time writing over 1,400 post-cards to would-be voters all over the country. He didn't stop there and has written a few hundred more so far in 2021.

Freya Lake's rescheduled date for hip replacement is February 9. Because of COVID considerations, the hospital will probably dismiss her the same evening. Her daughter Charlotte will monitor her recovery. Please keep her in your thoughts and prayers.

Rev. Gy surgery to patch up another CSF leak has also been rescheduled. They are heading to Los Angeles with Patti on February 23, and if all goes to plan, will be back in Michigan and well on the way to full recovery by the beginning of March.

Stace Danielson is still experiencing considerable pain from her cervical spine operation at Bronson Spine and Scoliosis Center a few weeks ago but feels optimistic. She had a similar surgery eight years ago but this one was far more complex and involved inserting a titanium plate.

Bob McWhorter, also a founding member of UUCU, is recovering from a serious stroke that has affected his left arm, hand, leg, and eye. He is working hard to regain his strength. Cards may be sent to:

Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital  
Room Number 4104  
235 Wealthy Street  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503



Bob McWhorter

We are happy to report that Stephanie Grathwol's cousin Cindy, who has been battling cancer for many months, is doing a little better, so Stephanie will spend less time with her in Detroit in the coming weeks.

Our 'snowbirds', Marsha Laya and Kathy Hays in Florida and Harold Beu in Alabama, 'zoom' into church so regularly we hardly notice they are out of state. Pat Fuehr will be joining the 'snowbird' club in February when she travels to Arizona in search of warmer weather.

Since one week before Christmas, Barb and Dick Bott have been safe like "turtles, with our heads tucked in," enjoying the outdoors at their cabin in the woods on the Rifle River — "up north," as we say. Their son David has been in their Portage house but will move soon and Barb and Dick plan to return by the beginning of February.

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.

# LEADERSHIP

## Board President's Corner

From [Nancy Calme](#)

On January 20th, we watched the presidential inauguration ceremony and the evening celebration. I am feeling relieved, encouraged, and hopeful for the future of the U.S.A. January was such an alarming and stressful month, clutching our breath and clinging to the conviction that our democracy would hold on and triumph in the end.



Of course, it is never really “the end.” People will continue to fight, argue, and stonewall to get their way, and unbalanced individuals will still do vicious things in the name of patriotism or what they see as the threats of multiculturalism and socialism. In my childhood education, socialism was presented to me as synonymous with communism and was an evil to be avoided at all costs. With that early training, I can see why extending social programs such as health care and universal income would make some people suspicious and afraid. I’d love to see politicians demonstrate more skills in listening, studying, and reconsidering ideas to see if perhaps their time has come.

I hope all of you are feeling more confident and hopeful. I have been attending Darby Fetzer’s “Civil Conversations” discussions and I believe they offer one way to overcome the barriers between people. I caught myself this week giving in to my impulse to cut off the conversation when I read a blog expressing doubts about the authenticity of mainstream news media. I hit the “unfollow” button. Then, I heard Darby’s voice in my head and forced myself to instead write a comment to the author expressing some compassion for how uncomfortable she must feel, not knowing who to trust. It opened up a conversation with her and the next day she posted about the method she was trying to use to wade through a variety of news sources. One baby step for Nancy.

My hope is that hundreds of baby steps and a few big strides in the right direction will begin to pull the country towards more equity, compassion, and sustainability. I really do believe it can happen.

- President Nancy Calme, Vice-President Erin Michael, Secretary Darby Fetzer, and Trustees Larry Higgins and Freya Lake serve on the UUCC Board of Trustees.
- The Board meets on the first Wednesday of the month at 5:30 PM via Zoom (login information is on the [UUCC Calendar](#))
- The minutes from their last meeting can be found [HERE](#).
- Any questions? Contact Nancy Calme ([nancy.calme@gmail.com](mailto:nancy.calme@gmail.com) or 269- 271-8851)



# PROGRAM COUNCIL



## Program Council—Where TOGETHER, and Apart- We Get Stuff Done!

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

Program Council is YOU! Everyone is invited to create programming at UCC via Zoom, second Sundays around **11:00 AM**. Bring your voice to our next meeting on **Sunday, February 14**.

### ***Celebrations abound!***

Phenomenal services by Rev. Harold Beu, our own congregants, Nick, and J. Barrett Lee! Happy Hour with Marcus 'Fable the Poet' Price, outstanding Generosity Sunday with Face Off Theatre, and a fabulous Holiday video card! TONS of Adult Enrichment programs, supporting our UCC and larger communities, SIX new members, and so much more!

### ***Opportunities ABOUND!***

- **Black History Month:** Check out [ShareKazoo.org](http://ShareKazoo.org) for events and local Black history.
- **Budget Time!** Please send the Board your financial needs for church year 2021-2022.
- **2020-21 Church Strategic Goal Updates:**
  - #1 *Technology:* equipment has been tested and determined to need minor adjustments and/or additions for live-streaming services now and into the future. Send questions to Nancy Calme.
  - #2 *Landscape/Building:* Board and Building & Grounds members met on 1/16 to discuss budget priorities moving forward. Eric will talk with Rev. Gy regarding paying one of their workers to fix an issue with lighting in the back of the church.
  - #3 *Adult Enrichment:* Multiple opportunities are available. Check the website and newsletter for dates/times for events on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays! We are doing it with more planned for 2021!
- **Covid-19 Guidelines:** The Board is monitoring and updating these guidelines weekly and posting the weekly email. No one is using the building currently.
- **UU the Vote Continues!** The focus continues to be on registering voters, along with how to care for yourself mentally and spiritually as we prepare to be involved in this work for the long haul. Visit the [UU the Vote](#) website to learn more.

See you on **Sunday, February 14, 11:00 AM** on Zoom!



**Thank you for all you do! Stay well!**

# STEWARDSHIP

## From the Finance Team

### **Contribution Statements sent in January:**

If you gave traceable payments on a pledge or other contributions to UUCG, you were emailed a Contribution Statement on 1/24/21 or 1/26/21. The Contribution Statement shows all your giving activity recorded in church records for the calendar year ended 12/31/20. This statement is intended to support your tax records and claims of deductions for charitable giving to UUCG. All receipts made via check, Give Plus, or other recorded means for which you received no goods or services are listed. As always, please review your record and let us know if you find any discrepancies which require correction (or if you did not receive the emailed statement). Your contributions and donations are sincerely appreciated. Thank you!

If you have any questions contact Kimberly Ridley, Assistant Treasurer.

Email [ridleyk@hotmail.com](mailto:ridleyk@hotmail.com) or call: (269) 569-3658



## Building Upgrades

The UUCG Board of Trustees met recently with Eric Nelson and Kevin Brozovich, from the Building and Grounds Committee, to design a strategy for implementing building improvements. It was the board's thought that having the building vacant for the upcoming months gives us a unique opportunity to accomplish some of these upgrades without interfering with the congregation's activities.

We reviewed a long, detailed list of potential projects and weighed them against each other under criteria such as:

- ◆ The urgency of need to continue functioning
- ◆ The impact on our finances
- ◆ Health and safety concerns
- ◆ Sustainability improvements
- ◆ Opportunity while building is vacant

Some projects were tagged as high priority because they could be effectively bundled together with others by the same contractors, such as a group of electrical improvements and repairs. The committee will use money from their current year budget and the Property and Maintenance Designated account that is set aside for this purpose. In addition, the board voted to free up money from the J.M. Batts Fund and the Memorial Fund as necessary to get these projects done by the fall of 2021.

Here is a list of the projects that have been chosen:

- ◆ Electrical (safety, function, and aesthetics)
- ◆ Replace exterior lighting on north, east, and south sides and add it on the west.

*(The list of projects is continued on page 9)*

# STEWARDSHIP

- ◆ Add more circuit capacity to the kitchen area
- ◆ Replace the four dimmer switches in the sanctuary
- ◆ Improve the lighting in the bathrooms
- ◆ Disconnect electricity to an old fallen light post
- ◆ HVAC (safety and function)
- ◆ Add more blower vents to the sanctuary
- ◆ Improve heating/air conditioning in the Community room and reduce the noise level from the cold air return
- ◆ Airflow/filtration improvement for Covid concerns including HEPA filters
- ◆ Bathroom – (function and aesthetics)
- ◆ Replace vanities, sinks, and faucets in men’s and women’s bathrooms
- ◆ Preventative maintenance (safety and function)
- ◆ Add more dehumidifiers in the basement to prevent mold problems
- ◆ Roof leak repair in kitchen area
- ◆ Front driveway sealing and crack repair



The board feels good about taking decisive action to get these things accomplished during this unusual time and is grateful for the efforts put in by Eric and Kevin to identify projects and oversee their completion. We will follow up with discussion about how to replenish our maintenance funds for the future.

If you have any questions about our building upgrade plans please contact Board President, Nancy Calme ([nancy.calme@gmail.com](mailto:nancy.calme@gmail.com)).

**SAVE THE DATE**

ANNUAL CELEBRATION  
OF GENEROSITY

**MARCH 27**

with entertainment by  
**SETH BERNARD**

# 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 **February 4 at 7:00 PM** we will consider the themes: **ACTION, ENGAGEMENT, and ACTIVISM.**

In preparation for this meeting Rev. Gy asks you to think about:

*Who inspires you?*

*What has been the spark that moves you from conviction to action?*

*How do you overcome inertia?*

### 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 **February 11 at 7:00 PM** is **Gossip**. Learn more about this Thoughtful Thursday at the bottom of this page.

### Third Thursday —A CONVERSATION WITH....

Once a month we invite special guests to join us to engage in conversation and answer our questions on a variety of topics. On February 18 at 7:00 PM, we are excited to be joined by the co-chair of the Outfront Faith Alliance, **Rev. Sarah Schmidt-Lee**. Learn more about Rev. Schmidt-Lee on page 11.

### Other Thursdays—ASSORTED PROGRAMMING

On the remaining Thursdays, we will present a variety of programming and activities. On **February 25 at 7:00 PM** we will cultivate Mindfulness with the **Rose, Thorn, and Bud** activity. During the meeting, each person will be asked to share something they are grateful for (a Rose), a challenge they are facing (a Thorn), and something they are looking forward to (a Bud).



### What is Wrong with Gossip?

Humans are hardwired to enjoy talking about other people. Harmless chatter can be entertaining and establishes intimacy within social circles, whereas malicious gossip provides a feeling of superiority.

At the next installment of our series on **Moral Decision Making** on **Thursday, February 11 at 7:00 PM** we will consider the ethical pitfalls of gossip as well as the various types of criticism we can direct toward others and the ethical nuances of criticism's counterparts—flattery and praise.

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! Click [HERE](#) for the Zoom link.

# LEARNING AND GROWTH



## A Conversation with Rev. Sarah Schmidt-Lee

Once a month we invite special guests to join us at our Thoughtful Thursday gathering to tell us more about the work they are doing in our community and answer any questions we might have. On **Thursday, February 18 at 7:00 PM**, we are honored to be joined by Rev. Sarah Schmidt-Lee, co-chair of OutFront Kalamazoo's Faith Alliance.

Rev. Schmidt-Lee has been in Kalamazoo for seven years and on staff at First Congregational Church in Kalamazoo for five of them. Within her role as Pastor for Faith Formation, she leads the congregation in striving for deeper LGBTQ+ inclusion, commitment to just immigration policies, and anti-racism work. She has been a Big Sister to a trans Little with Big Brothers Big Sisters and parents (with spouse J. Barrett Lee) two kids who are KPS students. In 2017, she was arrested as part of planned direct action advocating for DACA-recipients.

In addition to her formal education, Sarah's training includes nonviolent direct action training with the Kirkridge Center, ERRACE training, Family Systems training with Peter Steinke, and Enneagram training with Suzanne Stabile.

Click [HERE](#) for the Zoom login to join in the conversation with Rev. Schmidt-Lee



**Qigong at UCC** Our Qigong group meets each **Tuesday at 9:00 AM**. Anyone interested in learning this ancient Chinese mind-body-spirit practice is welcome to join! Click [HERE](#) for the Zoom link. If you have questions, contact [Freya Lake](#).

## Civil Conversations Small Group

The UCC Civil Conversations Small Group meets on the second Tuesday of each month. The next meeting is on **Tuesday, February 9 at 7:00 PM**.

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

Anyone interested in practicing emotional intelligence skills and learn how to engage in meaningful conversations that will help 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 meetings

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



## Welcoming Congregation

Plan to join us on **Thursday, March 25 at 7:00 PM** as we renew our Welcoming Congregation pledge with a religious education event, and congregational discussion of the 2012 film: **Pay It No Mind**.

We need interested individuals to commit to watch the video and review the discussions questions on your own prior to gathering. Find links to the video and questions here:

[Pay It No Mind Video](#)  
[Discussion Questions](#)

The call to Welcoming Congregations is that "to honor your original pledge, it's essential that new people in the congregation (as well as people who were originally involved in the program) understand your congregation's commitment to this work and learn about the current needs and concerns of LGBTQ+ people."



# CONNECTION

## Women's Book Group

[Stephanie Grathwol](#), Chair

### February Selection:

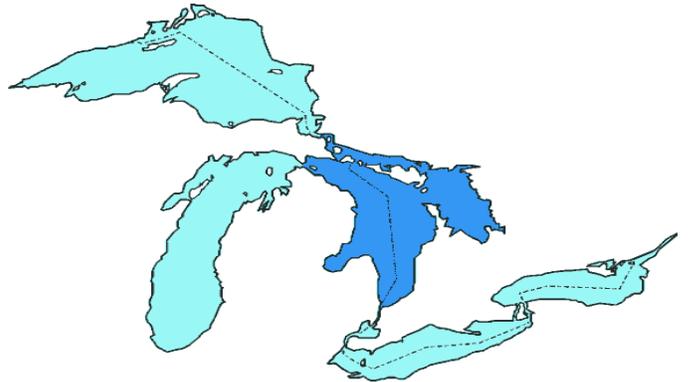
*The Death and Life of the Great Lakes* by Dan Egan

Friday, February 12 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: The Great Lakes—Erie, Huron, Michigan, Ontario, and Superior—hold 20 percent of the world's supply of surface fresh water and provide sustenance, work, and recreation for tens of millions of Americans. But they are under threat as never before, and their problems are spreading across the continent. The Death and Life of the Great Lakes is prize-winning reporter Dan Egan's compulsively readable portrait of an ecological catastrophe happening right before our eyes, blending the epic story of the lakes with an examination of the perils they face and the ways we can restore and preserve them for generations to come.*

The Women's Book Club starts with a short business meeting followed by the book discussion led, this month, by Freya Lake. All are welcome! Please contact Stephanie ([sargg.64@gmail.com](mailto:sargg.64@gmail.com)) for more information.

## Men's Group Breakfast

Saturday, February 20 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 [UUCS Calendar](#).



Join WMU professor Jill Hermann-Wilmarth as she explores Jacqueline Woodson's literary influence as a master storyteller, highlighting the featured community [Reading Together](#) books. (Woodson's books will also be the UUCS Women's Book Group selection for March.)

This will be a Zoom event, and requires registration.

Register here:

<https://www.kpl.gov/event/jacqueline-woodson-lecture/>

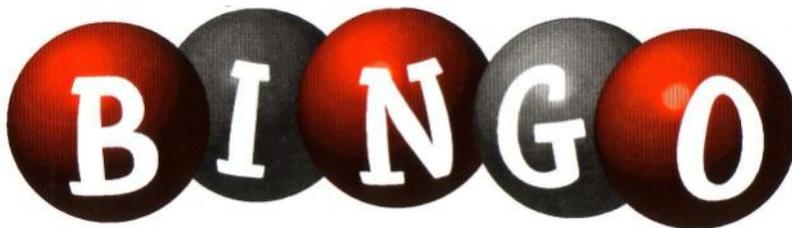
# FELLOWSHIP AND FUN

## Valentine's Bingo Night

**Saturday, February 13 at 6:30 PM**

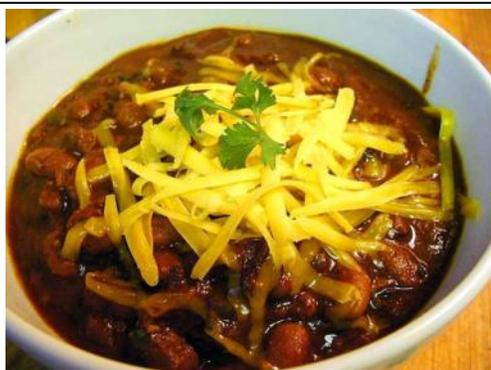
Everyone is invited to this event!

We have the following 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

You will receive your bingo cards in the mail by February 10. The Zoom link will be emailed to you. Wear red and come ready to have a fun night with UCC Bingo Caller Kevin Brozovich.



## It's Chili Supper Time!

This year is the 8th annual Guy & Jean Johnson "memorial" chili supper at UCC. Sadly, due to the pandemic, it will be different this year. The menu will feature the same two chili recipes (meat and vegetarian), homemade cornbread, and Betty Lee Ongley's birthday cake. However, we won't be able to enjoy each other's company playing games and sharing a beverage.

The food will be packaged and ready for pick up at the UCC "drive-thru", also known as the front door. Simply pull up, toot your horn, and Joe and Nancy will safely bring the food to your car. Pick up will be available from **5:00 – 7:00 PM on Saturday, February 20.**

If you've already paid for the Chili Supper at last years' Service Auction, you'll receive an email reminder. If you missed the opportunity to purchase at the Service Auction, simply send an email to [joe.calme@gmail.com](mailto:joe.calme@gmail.com) and you can pay your \$10 at pick up or mail a check to UCC with "Chili Supper" in the memo line.

**Thanks for supporting UCC and this traditional (and tasty) fundraiser.**



# SUSTAINABILITY

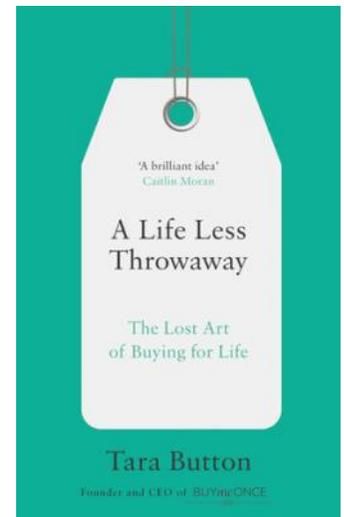


## Finding More Joy Through a Smaller Environmental Footprint

In January, the UCC Sustainability Small Group met to reflect on our sustainability journey so far and renew our commitment by setting new goals for the coming year. We focused our goals in five different areas: Food, Housing, Transportation, Goods, and Services.

Below are some of the goals for 2021 that people shared. Maybe YOU will be inspired to try to make some changes in your life this year too!

- ◆ Reduce eating meat/animal products to one meal a day
- ◆ Continue gardening and preserving home-grown and locally sourced foods
- ◆ Sign up for a year-round CSA
- ◆ Plant trees
- ◆ Buy no new clothes for 6 months
- ◆ Buy clothes made from natural fibers
- ◆ No online shopping in 2021
- ◆ Buy Nothing (other than necessities) in 2021
- ◆ Replace cleaning supplies with environmentally friendly options
- ◆ Save money for a Tesla
- ◆ Reduce driving to 2000 miles a year
- ◆ Walk and bike more
- ◆ Take vacations within Michigan in 2021
- ◆ Set aside time each week for study and reflection to help keep sustainability a personal priority
- ◆ Find ways to share sustainability message with the larger community
- ◆ Find ways to help UCC engage with groups working to combat climate change



At our next meeting on **Monday, February 15 at 7:00 PM** we will be discussing the first five chapters of ***A Life Less Throwaway: The Lost Art of Buying for Life*** by Tara Button

From Goodreads:

*Now more than ever, we live in a society where we covet new and shiny things. Not only has consumption risen dramatically over the last 60 years, but we are damaging the environment at the same time. Tara Button has become a champion of a lifestyle called 'mindful curation' – a way of living in which we carefully choose each object in our lives, making sure we have the best, most classic, most pleasing, and longest lasting – kettles, desks, pots & pans, scissors, coats and dresses, instead of surrounding ourselves with throwaway stuff and appliances with built-in obsolescence. Tara advocates a life that celebrates what lasts, what is classic and what really suits a person. Mindful curation is a lifestyle choice that will make you happier, healthier, and more fulfilled spiritual as well as helping save the planet.*



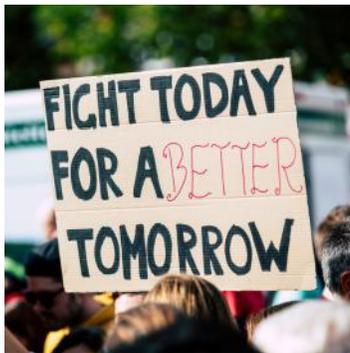
Everyone is welcome to join in the discussion! Click [HERE](#) for the Zoom link.

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

# SOCIAL JUSTICE

## Portage Kids Peaceful Protest

Our Thoughtful Thursday special guest in January, Sara Beaver Vogel, invited UUC members and friends to attend the Portage Kids Peaceful Protests against police brutality and racial injustice each **Wednesday** and **Sunday** from **noon to 1:00 PM** on the corner of Westnedge and Centre



across from Chicken Coop. (Please wear a mask and practice social distancing.)

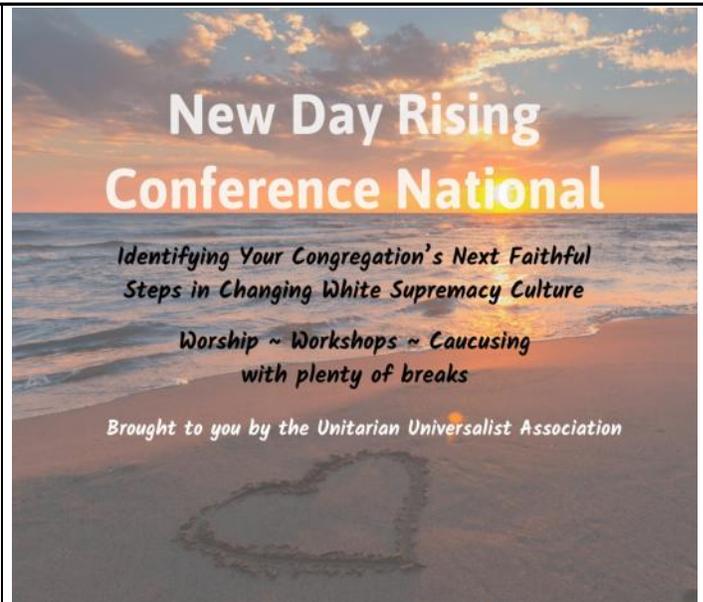
You can learn more about the Portage Kids Peaceful Protest on their Facebook Page (click [HERE](#)).

If you are interested in connecting with the Portage Lifting Our Voices Group that is affiliated with the Peaceful Protest group, contact Sara Vogel at: [sanne\\_kzoo@yahoo.com](mailto:sanne_kzoo@yahoo.com)

## Virtual Community Baby Shower

Our guest speaker on January 24, Wendy Fields, the president of the Metropolitan Kalamazoo Branch of the NAACP, asked us to help combat infant mortality in Kalamazoo County by supporting their Virtual Community Baby Shower on **February 20**. We are excited to announce that UUC will be a collection site for donations!

The MKB NAACP welcomes donations of new baby items including clothes, toys, diapers, and other supplies to present to expecting mothers in the community. Save the date and keep an eye on the weekly email for more information.



## New Day Rising 2021

### Unitarian Universalist National Conference

Sponsor: UUA Congregational Life Staff Group

Is your congregation ready to take a new step in changing white supremacy culture? (YES!) Would you like to learn what your fellow congregations are working on, and how you might apply it at home?

Join a continent of UUs as we explore the next steps in creating Beloved UU Communities.

On Your Own:

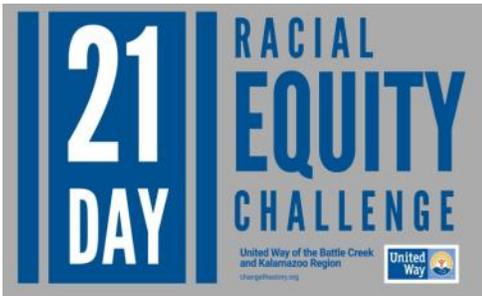
Watch compelling video TED-talk style testimonials from selected congregations around the continent sharing their learnings, hopes, and next steps in their quest for racial equity in their congregations

Together on **Saturday, February 27, 2021**

Worship ~ Workshops ~ Caucusing  
**12:00 noon -9:00 PM** (with plenty of breaks!)

Register [HERE](#). The fee is on a sliding scale. There may also be scholarship funds available from UUC. Financial considerations should not prevent anyone from attending.

# BLACK LIVES MATTER



## We Are the Fundamental Part of the Problem

by [Erin Michael](#)

From October 19 through November 12, 2020, I participated in the **21-day Equity Challenge** from United Way of Battle Creek/Kalamazoo Region. While I had previously completed a 21-day Racial Equity Challenge presented by the Michigan League of Public Policy, the United Way challenge provided state and local examples of historical and present-day inequities in multiple areas. A disclaimer is that I can speak only to my experience. As a transplant to Michigan, I have less understanding of the local history which made this challenge especially important and educational for me.

Even before the challenge began you knew this would be a learning experience. You were asked to fill out a pre-event survey to set your intentions and share your goals for the challenge. Day One was a Personal Racial Identity challenge. The very first question was, “How do you think about your racial identity and its relevance to your work/volunteerism/studies?” Think about the first time you became aware of your racial identity. WHAT?! The realization hit that I never have had to! PRIVILEGE #1. As a white person, this was a perfect start to understand that the next 21 days would be uncomfortable and educational.

Each day’s challenge came with questions to answer, three to six options of materials to read, listen to or write about and then commenting what, if any, action steps you would take. The first week we completed personal reflection challenges: identifying where and how we learned about race; defining ‘privilege’ and differentiating the five types; how avoidance by white people to talk about racial inequity perpetuates that inequity; and learning about the ‘cycle of socialization’ – how we develop values, habits and attitudes and learn to function in the world – to help us find what we are willing and ‘able’ to do to work for justice.

Week two shifted focus to a broader view of racial equity and social justice. We learned about how racism operates at different levels – internalized, interpersonal, institutional and systemic – and how each of these levels affect inequity in income, segregation, housing, and health. There were historic and present-day examples of these racial inequities from southwest MI and Kalamazoo County, making it impossible to rationalize that “this happens other places, not where I live!”

Week three provided a deep dive into specific examples of the effects race has on environmental justice, the racial wealth gap, and three days talking about inequities in education to include how segregation, the patterns of racial disparities in school discipline, ‘adverse childhood experiences’ or ACEs, and lack of high-quality childcare negatively impact the social and emotional health of our youngest. They start with an almost insurmountable deficit through no fault of their own. It is our responsibility to fight for their futures. And finally, how the compounding impact of racial trauma on Black, Indigenous and People of Color, along with all marginalized groups, creates an intersectionality of trauma that takes its toll on the psyche of victims so even the smallest acts of racism become unacceptable. We need to believe victims.

The final few days focused on how to build a Race Equity Culture in the workplace, at home, at school and in our communities; defining what it means and looks like to “be an ally” learning the do’s and don’ts of Allyship; *(continued on page 17)*

# RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

(continued from page 16) and learning about tools for the racial equity change process, focusing on 'asset framing.' Lastly, we were asked to write about our action plan. How will we be the voice for change, radically reorient our consciousness, and drive individual and community transformation?

We must share that 'seeing race' is essential to changing systems. Will you take the challenge to be part of the solution?

**Editor's Note:** The next 21—Day Equity Challenge offered by the United Way of Battle Creek and Kalamazoo begins on February 1. Click [HERE](#) to register.



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

The kids and I have come to the part in *This Book is Anti-Racist* by Tiffany Jewel where we are learning how to disrupt racism and call out people for their microaggressions and biases. This is hard. Some of the kids are not sure they could do this in real-life situations.

Disrupting racism sometimes requires us to speak and act in ways that will make some white people feel uncomfortable and angry. Our Unitarian Universalist values are centered in love, kindness, and compassion. We teach our kids to listen with an open heart to those who think differently than they do. We teach them that one of the highest purpose of our faith is to build bridges of understanding. Calling people out in no uncertain terms for the harm their words and attitudes cause BiPOC folx does not run counter to these teachings. There is no kindness and compassion in shying away from hard conversations. There is no Love in letting white supremacy culture continue to threaten people in our community. Black, Brown, and Indigenous lives are on the line.

When I was at General Assembly last summer, I got put in a break out room with some UUs from around the country to talk about dismantling white supremacy. There was a white woman in the group who was in her seventies. She sighed loudly and complained that she was "so tired of all this." She said she had done her part in the fight against racism and now she just wanted to rest. I could empathize, of course, but I also recognized that her attitude came from a place of privilege. Retirement from the work only seems like an option when you are not being directly affected by it. Change will only come when we all commit to do something, anything, every day to disrupt the system.

I recently saw this quote from MLK's daughter, Bernice King, that says this all better than I ever could:

***Kindness matters.***

***But kindness does not equal justice.***

***Civility counts.***

***But calling for civility is not the humane response to injustice.***

***Justice is.***

***Love is essential.***

***But love is not a passive, weeping bystander.***

***Love puts in work.***

Our Unitarian Universalist faith is calling us to put in difficult and ceaseless work. Together, we can rise to the challenge. May it be so.

## ONLINE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASSES:

Until regular services resume, our children and youth will meet on Sundays at 1:00 PM via ZOOM.

Please contact [Miriam](#) for login information.

# SIDE WITH LOVE

## THIRTY DAYS OF LOVE

Have YOU been taking time to side with Love during the Thirty Days of Love campaign? There is still plenty of time to get involved.

Thirty Days of Love is a Unitarian Universalist annual celebration that runs from Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in January through Valentine's Day in February. It is an opportunity to lift up the ways Unitarian Universalists and many of our partner organizations are building and organizing by taking bold, courageous action for intersectional racial justice.

Each day you can stop by the Side with Love website: [sidewithlove.org](http://sidewithlove.org) and find a 'menu' of activities to interact with all connected with a weekly theme. There are lists for general, kid, youth, and family audiences which include activities to Read, Watch, Participate, Listen, and for Worship. Check out a few of the offerings in the example below.

## 30 DAYS OF LOVE 2021

### READ

"To Invoke Love"  
by Sean Parker Dennison

Click [HERE](#)

### WATCH

"everything is still on fire"  
by Rev. Theresa I. Soto

Click [HERE](#)

### PARTICIPATE

Journal, create art, or have a discussion with a friend about what you think Love is asking of us in this time and place.

### WORSHIP

"God Calls Us To Love"  
offered by  
Rev. Summer Albayati

Click [HERE](#)



### LISTEN

Finding Our Way, Ep 1  
with Sonya Renee Taylor

Click [HERE](#)

There are also many free live events ( on Zoom and Facebook ) you can participate in:

February 3 at 7:00 PM—**Reading, Writing, and Racism** with Dr. Camika Royal and Dr. Bree Picower

February 4 at 7:00 PM—**Addressing Racism, Race, and Bias**, a writing workshop with William Sloan

February 9 at 7:00 PM - **Gather at the Table** with Sharon Leslie Morgan and Thomas Norman DeWolf

February 11 at 7:00 PM—**Envisioning Restoration and Repair: Art for Our Time** led by Rev. Tony Coleman

Click [HERE](#) for complete details and registration information for the all these live events.



# CALENDAR



## FEBRUARY 2021

DAY	DATE	EVENT	TIME
Tuesday	February 2	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	February 3	Board of Trustees Meeting	5:30 PM
Thursday	February 4	Stewardship Committee Meeting Thoughtful Thursday—Thematic Exploration	1:00 PM 7:00 PM
Sunday	February 7	Embracing Diversity with Rev. Gy After Service Coffee Hour Meet-Up for Youth	10:00 AM 10:45 AM 1:00 PM
Tuesday	February 9	Qigong Civil Conversations Small Group	9:00 AM 7:00 PM
Wednesday	February 10	Sunday Services Committee Meeting	5:30 PM
Thursday	February 11	Moral Decision Making	7:00 PM
Friday	February 12	Women's Book Group	1:00 PM
Saturday	February 13	UUCU Bingo Night	6:30 PM
Sunday	February 14	Put Some Love in the World with Rev. Gy After Service Coffee Hour Program Council Meet-Up for Youth	10:00 AM 10:45 AM 11:00 AM 1:00 PM
Monday	February 15	Sustainability Small Group	7:00 PM
Tuesday	February 16	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	February 17	NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	12:00 PM
Thursday	February 18	A Conversation with Rev. Sarah Schmidt-Lee	7:00 PM
Saturday	February 20	Men's Group Virtual Breakfast Chili Supper Pick-Up NAACP Community Baby Shower	8:30 AM 5:00 - 7:00 PM 9:00 - 11:00 AM
Sunday	February 21	Why, How, Where? with Rev. Gy After Service Coffee Hour Meet-Up for Youth	10:00 AM 10:45 AM 1:00 PM
Tuesday	February 23	Qigong	9:00 AM
Thursday	February 25	Thoughtful Thursday—Rose, Thorn, and Bud	7:00 PM
Sunday	February 28	Justice: Jurors Required with Kimberly Ridley After Service Coffee Hour Meet-Up for Youth	10:00 AM 10:45 AM 1:00 PM

**UU Community Church  
is served by:**

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Nick Sienkiewicz  
Music Director  
[nsienki@iu.edu](mailto:nsienki@iu.edu)

**2020-2021 Board of Trustees**

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Larry Higgins

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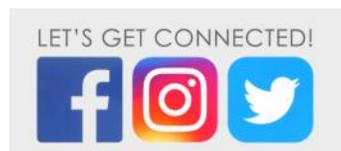
**The next Newsletter Deadline is  
Wednesday, February 17 at NOON**

Please send submissions to:  
**[uuccnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:uuccnewsletter@gmail.com)**

*CommUUnity Matters*

**Unitarian Universalist Community Church  
of Southwest Michigan**

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**SPIRITUALITY FOR  
DIVERSE PATHS**

**BLACK LIVES MATTER**