



# CommUUunity Matters

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest Michigan

April 2021

## **APRIL SERVICES**

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

### **April 4: *Easter* with Rev. Gy**

Easter this year, still doesn't feel like Easter. Despite all the positive developments, we are still in the tomb with Covid19, intensely aware of the loss and the suffering all around. How can we hold fast to the glimmers of hope? What will life will be like on the other side of the pandemic? How have our lives been transformed by this experience?

### **April 11: *Happy Anniversary* With Rev. Gy**

In the Spring of 1961, the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America met in Boston to formally and officially become the Unitarian Universalist Association. The blending of these two distinct religious traditions created something new, Unitarian Universalism, a living faith that continues to change, adapt, and transform.

### **April 18: *Sustainability Revisited* with Erin Augustine**

As our very first virtual guest speaker on April 19, 2020, Erin Augustine shared her ideas about finding more joy through sustainability. Little did she imagine that her words would inspire a group of UUCC people to embark on their own sustainability journeys. Erin returns to UUCC one year later to reflect on the lessons about sustainability the past year has taught us.

### **April 25: *No Feeling Is Final* with Rev. Erin Walter**

After a year of pandemic life, some days may feel almost normal, while others still bring us to our knees. Drawing upon the poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke and her own spiritual practice of music-making, guest minister, Rev. Erin Walter, will reflect on how we may endure ongoing isolation and struggle while also embracing moments of love and joy along the way.



## **Our Spiritual Theme for April: TRANSFORMATION**

April seems like the perfect time to contemplate transformation. There are signs of it all around us—new growth and new life abound.

The Rev. Elizabeth Nguyen claims that “our journey, as Unitarian Universalists, is to transform the big and the small, to transform ourselves, and to transform the world.”

This is easier said than done. Shedding old ways of thinking and doing requires us to leap out of the familiar and into the unknown. This is frightening and sometimes painful.

We need courage to take that leap, but we also need imagination. The first step in transformation is being able to imagine a future different from the past, to imagine a self-sense different from the one we have now.

Are you open to transformation? Can you imagine a new way of being for yourself? For this community? For our nation? For the world? What do you need to do today to get where you want to be tomorrow?

# GUESTS IN OUR PULPIT

***We are excited to welcome the following guests to our virtual pulpit in April:***

**Erin Augustine** is the founder of Carbon Free Family. She lives in a 100-year-old farmhouse in downtown Rockford, Michigan with husband, Robbie, two daughters, two dogs, and five chickens. Her family loves to hike and camp, and find awe-inspiring moments while connecting with the natural world around them. They grow fruits, vegetables, herbs, and eggs (thanks to the chickens!) in their backyard garden and have enjoyed creating a small home-stead in their city yard.



Getting to a place where they are living their values has been a journey, complete with setbacks, wrong turns, and unexpected detours. Carbon Free Family was born as a way to document their sustainability journey and recommit to a promise of a simple life, with more time to play, less stuff to clean, and less waste to manage.

Erin has a bachelor's degree in environmental engineering from Northwestern University. She has worked in environmental education, non-profit, environmental consulting, and corporate sustainability roles. You can learn more about Carbon Free Family and ways you can adopt a waste-free lifestyle [HERE](#).



**Rev. Erin J. Walter** is a community minister, activist, and musician based in Austin, Texas, where she is affiliated with Wildflower, a Unitarian Universalist Community. Her work is rooted in the powerful connection between the arts, justice movements, and multicultural community.

A YMCA director and chaplain until COVID-19 layoffs, Rev. Erin now centers her ministry as a singer/songwriter for the band Parker Woodland, whose debut EP ***The World's On Fire (and We Still Fall in Love)*** was released in February of 2021.

Rev. Erin is also the longtime bassist for queer rock band Butch County, a board member for the Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry, a winner of the 2017 UU Women's Federation Sermon Award, and the leader of a joy-filled free public Zumba class over Zoom on Friday mornings.



# FROM THE MINISTER



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

*I think this is the prettiest world— so long as you don't mind a little dying,  
how could there be a day in your whole life that doesn't have its splash of happiness?"*

— Mary Oliver, House of Light

The one-year anniversary of our changed existence has come and gone. I remember that last year in March when we were called to change our routines, wash our hands incessantly, isolate from people of other households, and stop meeting in large numbers – only till maybe May, it all felt impossible and harsh.

Oh, how much we've changed since! We learned that we can work from home, we can even do church from home. We've abandoned hugs, handshakes, and got used to wearing a mask everywhere all the time. We learned to cook new dishes, figured out ways to order groceries without ever leaving the house. We watched as the disease circled closer and closer to us until we all lost someone to it.

Soon it will be May again. Will the virus let up enough for us to dare get together again? With the vaccine out, and the beginning of a new, more compassionate and competent administration, we're birthing new hopes of returning to some form of "normal". I am curious what that might look like. I can't see it just yet.

I actually hope that our world will have changed forever. We are only as strong and resilient as our weakest link. We learned this now. We learned what lean healthcare systems can and cannot do, and that the bottom line costs lives. I'd like to hope that we will change these systems. For good, for better.

What excites me most is that we are at the dawn of a new world. I sense a possibility for transforming a dog-eat-dog world into a compassionate, caring one. Of course, humans have missed the mark before, it is not by accident that we ended up with systems of oppression and injustice. Will we miss the mark this time, though? I'd like to imagine that we won't. I'd like to imagine and see it vividly, for I know that if we can't imagine it, we can't create it.

So, I imagine a world governed by the golden rule. I imagine that in our country education and healthcare are rights and free to everyone. Gun control is a reality, mass shootings are headed to extinction. Anyone working a forty-hour workweek can support themselves and their families with dignity and grace. We become a happier people.

I hope we won't let a good lesson go to waste.

I have hope in us. This is the prettiest world after all (so long as we don't mind a little dying...).

On a personal note: I returned from California where I had another procedure done to stop the spinal leak and it appears that it's been successful. I have been upright for about ten days now and you can once again catch me smiling with a zest for life.

Thank you for your unwavering support. It means the world to both Patti and me. I know that my illness caused a lot of stress for our church community and hopefully, we're only stronger for it. Thank you for your compassion and caring.

Here's to a year of wonder, possibilities, and commitment to connection with each other however that may look. We don't know the future, but we can meet it with all of our goodness. And so it is.

# CARING COMMUNITY



## APRIL CARING COMMUNITY NEWS

*As you grow older you will discover that you have two hands,  
one for helping yourself, the other for helping others.*

*~ Audrey Hepburn*



Let us pause to remember our gentle friend, **Jim King**, who passed away in March. Jim was a vital member of the congregation for many years. Most recently we remember him helping to keep the flower beds and the church building looking good, or book in hand, patiently waiting at the back of the sanctuary for wife Mary to finish a meeting or choir practice. At other times he served on the Board and took an active part in outreach activities such as serving Saturday breakfast with a team of UUCU friends at Ministry with Community. He also served on the year-long Search Committee that resulted in the Congregation's vote to call Jill Terwilliger to serve as our first settled minister in 2004. Jim was

always a thoughtful listener and silent observer. Although taciturn, his opinions and thoughts, when offered, were poignant, quite profound, and brought clarity to many a discussion. We will miss his keen and witty sense of humor and his sincere and hearty hugs. Click [HERE](#) to read Jim's obituary and please hold Mary King and all of Jim's family your heart at this difficult time.

Could it be that we're edging away from the pandemic and closer to what we used to call "normal life"? Take **Betty Lee Ongley**, for example. She allowed herself to go in for her first haircut since October, and her Ladies Library group (who have been together "forever") met recently and joyfully for the first time since COVID-19 took over. And, after a year of not venturing into restaurants, she celebrated her daughter Jill's March birthday by taking her out to brunch. Congratulations to Betty Lee and Jill and to everyone else who, at this point, have become "fully vaccinated." On April 5, Michigan opens vaccine eligibility for ALL adults.

**Bob and Barb McWhorter** are about to get their second shots and can hardly wait to hang out with fully vaccinated church people. Bob continues to work on the aftermath of his stroke, with his right side still affected. Along with physical therapy, he takes oodles of medications. The work of recovery is a challenging task for both of them. They are very much looking forward to returning in person to the church but, meanwhile, cards are always welcome: 1761 Greenbriar, Portage, MI 49024. Phone calls, too.

**Joe Calme** (helping with intake) and **Pat Fuehr** (administering vaccines) are part of the vaccination efforts in Cass and Kalamazoo counties. Thank you both for being part of the solution!

**Julie Kelemen's** vaccine eligibility came through her position as a home health aide. Neither her job nor her health has been impacted by the pandemic. In October, her elderly father sold the family home and Julie now has an apartment. Her biggest challenge, she says, has been the adjustment to living alone, but she feels "blessed in so many ways."

**Stephanie Grathwol** shares the latest about her "traveling RNs": Her son Christopher and daughter-in-law Nicola, both Registered Nurses, have relocated to an RV Resort (continued on page 5)

# CARING COMMUNITY

*(continued from page 4)* in between Portland, Oregon, and Mt. Hood. Chris has a new RN contract at Kaiser Permanente and expects to complete his last online RN-BSN course in May. Nicola is as organized as ever, making sure that all is well. Canine Liam has joined felines, Sammie and Bubba.

Stephanie also talked with **Jim Heveran** at his winter location in Fairhope, Alabama. Jim's bout with COVID, which was a tough one, perhaps left behind a small silver lining: He has been told that there's no rush to get his vaccination because he'll be immune for a time (no firm understanding, apparently, for how long). **Jim** and partner **Ellie** are on two lists and waiting for the call to get their vaccine. Jim said that Fairhope did not, thankfully, experience any of the recent awful weather conditions farther north.

Health issues required **Jon Vanderberg**, a long-time member, to move away from us a couple of years ago in order to be closer to his daughter and her family in Massachusetts. Reports are that he is now in an apartment and doing somewhat better. Mail can reach him through his daughter at: Mr. Jon Vanderberg, C/O Laura Flordalis Vanderberg, 20 Waldo Rd., Arlington, MA 02474.

With the church being closed for so long and with little in-person contact between us, will we have to become reacquainted with one another? No doubt about it, the details of our separate lives started to get fuzzy about a year ago. **Steve Tasko** shares the following, to help bring the Tasko-Sonier family back into focus:

***Hayden** turned 21 in November. He continues to work full-time at Erbelli's and has been taking classes part-time at WMU (although he chose not to this year, as he is not a big fan of online learning). He's been living with friends for the past couple of years but is looking forward to moving into his own apartment by himself next month. Still playing the piano, and has added the guitar, ukulele and harmonica to the list.*

***Grayson** is 17 and will graduate from Portage Central High School in June of this year. He is counting the days. No plans post-high school yet.*

***Nicholas** is 14 (to be 15 in May), will graduate from Portage Central Middle School in June, and will be heading to Central High in the fall. Both Nicholas and Grayson have been doing online learning for about a year.*

***Denise** continues to work in the intensive care unit at Bronson. Her unit took care of COVID patients. She also continues to teach Zumba at the YMCA – and given the pandemic, she kept it going initially online from our basement to teaching in the Y parking lot to finally back inside at the Y.*

***Steve:** Not all may know, but I took an early retirement from WMU starting last September to pursue work as a freelance research scientist. I'm involved with research consulting that focuses on noise exposure and hearing. I was at WMU for close to 20 years. I must admit that moving from a relatively secure job to a much more insecure position of being self-employed (with kids still in house) was a bit daunting.*

Along with crocuses and daffodils, we get some springy birthdays to celebrate in April. Happy cake and ice cream to **Barbara Bott, Stace Danielson, Kayle Rice, Ryan Brozovich, Nancy Crowell, Kelin Michael, and Freya Lake!**

As always, if you or someone you know is in need of support, you can contact one of our point persons: Nancy Crowell 599-1235, Rita Stevens 330-0376, or Judy Oliver 353-9397. Sharing is caring!

# LEADERSHIP



## Board President's Corner

From [Nancy Calme](#)

The annual pledging canvass is coming to a close and I am encouraged to hear that once again, UUCC members and friends have given generously to keep the church operating in the next year. For myself, a year of Covid lockdown has presented many challenges but has made the connections within our church community more precious than ever before. It's the old story of a door clanging shut but then a few windows opening to show us new alternatives we never would have imagined without a little challenge to nudge us along.

I believe Joe and I have never been more involved in our church, with the background workings of Sunday services, fun social events, adult enrichment gatherings, and continual surprises to deal with on the Board of Trustees. These are my people, my tribe, my family. What would life be like if those things were taken out of it? It is unthinkable. It is priceless.

I feel such gratitude that all of us do what we can to keep it going and make it better, year to year. At our church we dig deep, and give all we can of our time, our hearts, our brain power, and our finances. Depending on where each of us is in our lives, the balance of these offerings will vary, but our love of this church community and its mission earns it a high priority.

Thank you!

- 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)



## UUCC 2021 Pledge Results

The Stewardship Committee is pleased to announce the 2021-22-pledge total of \$97,042 from 36 pledge units. This is an increase from last year! We expect to receive more pledges and will announce the final 2021 results soon. We are continually amazed by your ongoing generosity to support the mission of this church.

If you have not pledged yet and would like to do so, you can submit your pledge information to Ron Crowell. Please know that we value everyone's contributions to our church in all forms. Thanks to each of you for all you do and give to UUCC.

The Stewardship Committee is Regena Nelson, Joe Calme, Ron Crowell, and Marsha Laya.

# GENEROSITY CELEBRATION

Thank you to all who attended our *Celebration of Generosity* on March 27 with special musical guest, Seth Bernard, who blessed us with beautiful music, a thoughtful message, and a loving, kind spirit. The evening was not only a wonderful end to our annual pledge drive, but a chance for us to try our very first 'hybrid' gathering with a small group of fully vaccinated friends watching on the big screen in the sanctuary and many more joining in via Zoom. Regena Nelson noted, "We all got a little emotional seeing the small group gathered at the church. It gave us hope that we will be able to gather in person in 2021." Amen!

## Musical Guest Seth Bernard



You can learn more about Seth on his website: [www.samuelsethbernard.com](http://www.samuelsethbernard.com)

### **Reflection on the Pledge Drive , from Board President, Nancy Calme:**

On March 27 we held a Celebration of Generosity – not only the financial generosity of all our members and friends, but also the generosity of spirit in our congregation. I want to point out just a few of the amazing contributions of our members that make this year so special.

- Kimberly Ridley dug in and obtained two Paycheck Protection Plan loans for the church to insure that we could continue paying our staff in spite of potential losses due to Covid. The first one, obtained in April 2020, has already been forgiven and does not need to be paid back. The two together totaled over \$34,000.
- Eric Nelson and Kevin Brozovich worked with the Board of Trustees to choose building improvements that can be done while the building is closed down. After so many years of wishing, we are making significant investments in the electrical, HVAC, and bathrooms, as well as addressing some water and parking lot issues.
- The congregation voted to do what needs to be done to compensate Miriam Epskamp for her over-the-top efforts to keep us informed and running smoothly during this crazy year.
- The Sunday Services Committee managed to book amazingly creative programs to fill the schedule in a challenging year. The board added the extra funding they needed to make it happen because once again, it was a good investment.
- The Stewardship Committee helped us have fun together remotely while raising extra money for the church in all kinds of virtual events.
- Harold Beu, Darby Fetzer, Eric Nelson, and Freya Lake all offered their skills and resources to give us special adult enrichment opportunities.
- Rev. Gy managed to provide pastoral care, participate in meetings, consult with key committees, and deliver spiritual leadership even during her debilitating illness.
- Denise Sonier kept quietly leading the team of volunteers to help our Congolese refugee family adapt to American life.
- Think about the love and friendship you have enjoyed by participating in the Women's Book group, the Men's Breakfast, or the Sustainability group. If you have had hardships or even a birthday, you may have received cards or meals through the coordination of the Caring Community.

The bottom line is that this church community provides value beyond measure. The more we give of our time and our money, the more we receive. Where else can you get such a return on investment? Thank you all for your generosity, putting your money where your heart is.

# 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.

Celebrations abound! Outstanding services! Building improvements! Education, engagement and action on civil conversations, moral decision-making, sustainability, racism, equity, climate change, sexual health, and more!

Bring your voice to our next meeting on **Sunday, April 11.**

### **Opportunities Abound!**

- **2020-21 Church Strategic Goal updates:**

- #1 *Technology*: Steve, Eric, Nancy, and Denise tested equipment for hybrid (in-person/virtual) services and things look good; finalizing equipment needs..
- #2 *Landscape/Building*: Andy working on native plantings, this will be a summer project. Air filtration, furnace, and air conditioning projects are in process for sanctuary and community room; vanities/sinks/lights for upstairs bathrooms are being chosen; outdoor lighting improvements will follow. Want to help? Contact Andy or Eric/Kevin.
- #3 *Adult Enrichment*: All events are well-attended, and engagement is high! NEW opportunity coming in April – discussion on the UU book, *A Chosen Faith*, for new and long-time congregants! Check our website, weekly emails, and newsletter for dates/times for events on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays!

- **Budget time!** Sun, 4/25 after service – 2021-22 congregation budget review
- **Call for Annual Reports:** Email went out to leads of committees and groups to submit the summary of your group's members, successes and lessons learned to the board by 4/30.
- **Buddy Benches:** Keep collecting plastic caps and give to Freya!
- **Covid-19 Guidelines:** The Board is monitoring and updating these guidelines weekly and posting the weekly email. As vaccinations increase, we will work to safely adapt building usage. Watch for updates.
- **Community Events** – get involved!
  - Sustainability*: 2nd & 4th Fridays, Noon – Kalamazoo Climate Crisis Coalition's Fridays for the Future and check out <https://www.goingzerowaste.com/> for tips to live greener
  - Equity, Racial Justice, Peace*: Check out <https://www.faceofftheatre.com/>, <https://www.kalfound.org/About/TRHTKalamazoo>, <http://www.ShareKazoo.org>, and <https://interfaithkazoo.org> for upcoming events and performances;
  - Wed's and Sun's, Noon-1pm Portage Kid's Peaceful Protests, corner of Centre and Westnedge

See you on Sunday, April 11, 11:00 AM on Zoom! Looking ahead, our May meeting is moving to the third Sunday, May 16!

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

# ANNUAL MEETING

## Budget Q&A Forum

**April 18 at 11:30 AM**

During the Annual Meeting on Sunday, May 23, members will be asked to approve the annual budget.

The proposed 2021-2022 budget is still being finalized by the Board of Trustees. A copy will be emailed to you on Sunday, April 12. Please contact the office if you need a paper copy of the budget mailed to you.

Members of the Board of Trustees and Finance Team will host a Budget Q&A Forum on **Sunday, April 18** at approximately 11:30 AM after the virtual Coffee Hour following the Sunday Service to answer any questions you might have about the budget prior to the annual meeting.

If you are unable to attend the Budget Forum for any reason, you may direct your questions about the budget to Board President, Nancy Calme.



## Your Vote is Your Voice

Our Unitarian Universalist Fifth Principle calls on us to use "democratic process within our congregations." To that end, we encourage all UUCC members to be informed and involved in church governance.

One of the important ways to be involved is to attend the Annual Meeting and cast votes for candidates for the Board of Trustees and the Nominating Committee and on other church matters.

Members eligible to vote are those who have made a traceable financial donation to UUCC this church year and have signed our membership book no later than April 23, 2021.

If you have questions about how you can become a member, please [contact Rev. Gy.](#)

UU Community Church  
of Southwest Michigan

**ANNUAL MEETING  
of the Congregation**

**Sunday, May 23, 2021  
11:00 AM**



## A Message from the

## Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee is pleased to announce names of the nominees for the UUCC Board of Trustees. These nominations are for 2-year terms beginning with the 2021-22 church year.

**Andy Miller**

**Eric Nelson**

**Judy Pigg-Behrendt**

The Annual Meeting is currently scheduled for Sunday, May 23, 2021. At this time, members will elect three 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.

Respectfully submitted, UUCC Nominating Committee: Betty Lee Ongley and Joe Calme

# 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 **April 1 at 7:00 PM** Rev. Gy will lead a discussion about **REBIRTH** and **TRANSFORMATION**. **To prepare for the discussion, consider these questions:**

*The earth is transforming as the Earth moves from winter to spring. Do nature's new life and growth bring you renewed hope? Are those feelings grounded in reality, or not?*

*Is transformation possible? In what areas of life? What does it look and feel like?*

*What motivates people to be transformed?*

*What role does intention play? Do we need to expect and accept transformation to be transformed?*

### 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 **April 8 at 7:00 PM** is **Liberty**. (See below.)

### 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. A scheduling conflict will prevent our guest joining us on the third Thursday so will host **Jennifer Teed**, Justice Projects Coordinator at the **Michigan UU Social Justice Network** on **Thursday, April 29**. Read more about Jennifer on page 11.

### Other Thursdays—ASSORTED PROGRAMMING

On the remaining Thursdays, we will present a variety of programming and activities. On **April 22 at 7:00 PM** we will have a **Movie Discussion Group** for the film ***This Changes Everything*** and on **April 15 at 7:00 PM**, we will gather for **Rose, Thorn, and Bud** gratitude practice. (Learn more on pages 11 and 13)

## The Ethics of Liberty

Due to a technical glitch last month, we were unable to share the lecture about the Ethics of Liberty during our last **Moral Decision Making Lecture and Discussion Group**. We will try it again this month on **Thursday, April 8 at 7:00 PM**.

The question we will consider: Do we have a moral obligation to be healthy? This will be a very interesting topic to take on in the middle of a pandemic and amid news stories of people refusing the Covid19 vaccine. The lecture by Clancy Martin will pit the views of Aristotle and John Rawls against those of Robert Nozick on individualism and self-determination.



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 Jennifer Teed

Once a month we invite special guests to join us at a Thoughtful Thursday gathering to tell us more about the work they are doing and answer any questions we might have. Our guest on **Thursday, April 29 at 7:00 PM** will be **Jennifer Teed**, Justice Projects Coordinator with Michigan UU Social Justice Network (MUUSJN).

As a lifelong Unitarian Universalist, Jennifer is strongly committed to working for Social Justice. She is active with Detroit Area Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ), the Peoples Water Board, the Michigan Coalition Against Tar Sands (MiCats), the Detroit Light Brigade, and was very active in Occupy Detroit in 2011. In addition to consulting for MUUSJN, Jennifer has taught art in after-school programs in Detroit, served as a Director of Religious Education at the Detroit and Farmington UU Churches, and is a visual artist who experiments with many mediums. She lives in Detroit with her life partner Eric and their dog, Muhammad Ali.

Jennifer looks forward to sharing her experiences as a changemaker as well as information about MUUSJN and the issues/projects they are currently working on. Click [HERE](#) for the Zoom login to join in the conversation with Jennifer Teed.

## Earth Day at UCC

Earth Day this year, **April 22**, is also a **Thoughtful Thursday**. We will spend time during our gathering at 7:00 PM discussing Naomi Klein's 2015 film ***This Changes Everything***.



In the film, Klein argues that the real inconvenient truth about global warming is that it's not about carbon, it's about capitalism, and the struggle against climate change is intimately linked to struggles for economic and social justice. To drive change, she argues a grass-roots mass movement is required that draws together various strands of existing social and political struggles.

Come and be part of the conversation as we consider how we can work together to confront the vast challenges we face and transform the world in a way that will benefit all living things.

You can watch the film on YouTube by clicking [HERE](#).

## 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!

Our virtual Qigong Group provides you:

- A private space to exercise. During the practice camera and mics are turned off!
- An opportunity to increase your flexibility with stretching exercises.
- Deep breathing exercises to help center your mind and reduce anxiety.
- A supportive community that cares about you!

Click [HERE](#) for the Zoom link. If you have any questions about the group, contact Freya Lake.



# LEARNING AND GROWTH

## Adult Enrichment Opportunity

A discussion group to explore the book, *A Chosen Faith*, will meet once a week for six weeks beginning in April. *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.

This adult enrichment opportunity is recommended for long-time members and newcomers alike. Exploring this book with others can help you better articulate the sources of your faith and deepen your understanding of what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist.

If you are interested in attending, you can contact the office for help finding a copy of *A Chosen Faith* or order your own from the [InSpirit Bookstore](#).

Details about the day and time this class will meet are still being finalized. Keep an eye on the Weekly Email or contact [the office](#) for more information.



## Upcoming UU Social Justice Events

Unitarian Universalist congregations around the state are holding virtual events centered on racial and environmental justice. These events are free and visitors are welcome.

*Birmingham Unitarian Church: **Rethinking the Criminal "Justice" System, April 1, 7:00-8:30 PM***, with a panel of speakers from Oakland University: Click [HERE](#) for more info.

*Birmingham Unitarian Church: **At the Corner of Environment and Race in Southeast Michigan, April 10, 10:00-11:30 AM***, with State Senator Stephanie Chang, District 1, Detroit and Shea Howell, co-founder of the James & Grace Lee Boggs Center to Nurture Community Leadership. More info [HERE](#).

*First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor: **The Prison Within, April 10, 6:30-8:00 PM*** Featuring a discussion about restorative justice and the film, [The Prison Within](#). More info [HERE](#).

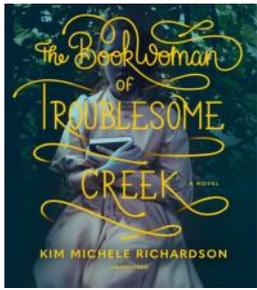
## Civil Conversations Small Group Facilitated by [Darby Fetzer](#)

On Tuesday, March 9th, 13 participants met to share their motivations to attend the UUC Civil Conversations. Reasons included: bridging the divide in today's world, being better equipped to have Civil Conversations with family members, tempering tendencies of being impassioned or conversely, withdrawing from conversation, and building the beloved community in the wider world.

The group also brainstormed "Where do opinions come from?" The list to date includes: location of residence, childhood experiences, family values, socio-economic status, religion, education, mentors & teachers, group affiliation, personal experiences, loyalty to your tribe, personal gain-what's in it for me, news & media, social media, conspiracy theories and research/reflection/your truth. This exercise was designed to help participants gain greater empathy and understanding for others and the life factors shaping their views.

Marijuana Use was the topic of our Civil Conversation discussion. Participants were encouraged to share differing views, deeply listen and ask open-ended questions. It was interesting to hear a variety of thoughts on this subject. The next Civil Conversation gathering is **Tuesday, April 13 at 7:00 PM**. The topic of our Civil Conversation will be Poverty. Newcomers are welcome! Hope to see you there!

# CONNECTION



## Women’s Book Group

[Stephanie Grathwol](#), Chair

**April Selection:**

***The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek***

By Kim Michele Richardson

**Friday, April 9 at 1:00 PM**

From Goodreads.com:

*A lonely young Appalachian woman joins the historical Pack Horse Library Project of Kentucky and becomes a librarian, riding across slippery creek beds and up treacherous mountains on her faithful mule to deliver books and other reading material to the impoverished hill people of Eastern Kentucky.*

*Inspired by the true and historical blue-skinned people of Kentucky and the brave and dedicated Kentucky Pack Horse library service, *The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek* showcases a bold and unique tale of the Packhorse Librarians in literary novels—a story of fierce strength and one woman's belief that books can carry us anywhere—even back home.*

Click [HERE](#) to join the book discussion via Zoom:

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

## Men’s Group

### Virtual Breakfast

**Saturday, April 17  
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.

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



## Generosity Sunday

Several times a year, we designate an organization as the recipient of our Generosity Sunday collection. In April we will be collecting for **Helping Other People Exceed (H.O.P.E) Thru Navigation**.



H.O.P.E. thru Navigation is a Kalamazoo-based grassroots initiative whose mission is to provide individuals detoured in life by addiction, homelessness, imprisonment, discrimination, trauma, and immigration status specialized wrap around navigation services and support.

On Sunday, April 11, Gwendolyn Hooker, executive director of H.O.P.E. Thru Navigation will join our Sunday Service to let us know more about the programs your donations will help support.

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

## Rose, Thorn, Bud

During **Thoughtful Thursday** on **April 15 at 7:00 PM**, you will have an opportunity to share what’s bringing you down, lifting your spirits, and offering you some hope during our *Rose, Bud, Thorn* mindfulness practice.

All are welcome to attend this adult enrichment opportunity. Click

[HERE](#) for the Zoom link. Contact Miriam if you have any questions.



# SUSTAINABILITY



## Finding More Joy Through a Smaller Environmental Footprint

Each month the UCC Sustainability Small Group meets to reflect on their sustainability journeys, to share successes and failures, and explore ideas about how to live more gently on the Earth. Here are some of the resources shared at their last meeting:

- [The Great Green Wall](#) This a film about Africa's Great Green Wall — an ambitious vision to grow an 8,000km 'wall' of trees stretching across the entire width of the continent to restore land and provide a future for millions of people.
- ***The MIND Diet Plan and Cookbook: Recipes and Lifestyle Guidelines to Help Prevent Alzheimer's and Dementia*** by Julie Andrews. This cookbook features a meal plan as well as healthy recipes that utilize berries, green and leafy vegetables, whole grains, beans, and nuts – avoiding foods such as red meat, butter, cheese, and fried foods.
- ***A Terrible Thing to Waste: Environmental Racism and Its Assault on the American Mind*** by Harriet Washington This book details and contextualizes the specific ways in which white environmental racism targets Native American, Latinx, and Asian and Pacific Islander communities in the United States, it generally focuses on the Black community and the overwhelming burden of toxicity that has been placed upon them.
- [Healing Relationships in Community and in Ourselves](#) This a recording of a webinar exploring the differences between a Western worldview and an Indigenous worldview on climate change featuring Eriel Tchekwie Deranger, the Executive Director of Indigenous Climate Action.
- Kalamazoo Climate Crisis Coalition's ***Fridays for the Future*** programs are recorded and available on their [YouTube Channel!](#)

The Sustainability Small Group will not meet in April. You can hear from them during the Earth Sunday service on April 18 instead. The next group meeting will be on **Monday, May 17 at 7:00 PM**. Newcomers are always welcome. Click [HERE](#) for the Zoom link. For more information about the UCC Sustainability Small Group, contact [Miriam](#).



## Keep Those Caps Coming!

Amazing! Another 12 pounds of plastic caps were collected by church friends bringing our total to date to 47 pounds saved from landfills or waterways.

Please keep collecting those hard plastic caps and lids from milk jugs, bottles, and other containers. You can call Freya at 269 324-3503 or 269 216-1186 to arrange a pick up your contribution to the Buddy Benches "cap"ital project! Thank you for your support!

# EARTH WEEK



## Earth Day 2021: Opportunities for Local Engagement

*Hope for Creation invites congregations and faith-based organizations to join us in commemorating Earth Day 2021. Here are ways people of faith can get involved:*

1. Attend an Earth Day focused worship service in April! (On April 18, UUC's service will be all about Sustainability!)
2. Learn more about Faith Climate Action Week, April 16-25: [Sacred Ground: Cultivating Connections Between Our Faith, Our Food, and the Climate](#)
3. View Hope for Creation's 2021 Earth Week service, *Honoring Earth and Celebrating Soil*, available on [Hope for Creation's YouTube channel](#) in April
4. Spread the word about the City of Kalamazoo's new pilot program to recycle polystyrene, with a first drop-off date of Saturday, April 24 (Hope for Creation is providing volunteers to sort and bag at the drop-off site)
5. Attend the Parchment Community Library program, [Faith Perspectives on Climate Change](#), on Tuesday, April 20 at 7 PM (view clergy videos in advance, available with registration link on the webpage)
6. Enter submissions by April 14 for the 2021 [Westminster Art Festival's](#) juried exhibit of visual arts and poetry sponsored by the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Portage with an environmental theme exploring the role of weather, seasons, climate, and climate change in our lives and in our interconnected world.
7. Join other local congregations installing electric-vehicle charging stations through a consortium organized by Hope for Creation (learn more from this [Green Team Presentation](#))
8. Participate in [Earth Day Kalamazoo 2021](#). The theme is local sustainability efforts and resources, featuring videos in a virtual festival style.
9. Attend the [Portage Green-A-Thon](#) on Sunday, April 25 from 11 AM—3 PM in the City Hall parking lot. The Green-A-Thon will feature games and representatives from many local organizations and businesses providing education about environmental ideas that can be used in your home or business.
10. Visit Michigan's website for [Earth Day 2021](#), where the theme is "Restore Our Earth"

*UU Community Church is a member of Hope for Creation, a grassroots inter-religious group working to encourage and support faith-based action on climate change and environmental justice in greater Kalamazoo. Being part of Hope for Creation (the Southwest Michigan Chapter of Michigan Interfaith Power & Light) connects our congregation with others across the region and is a symbol of our congregation's commitment to Earth stewardship and climate action.*

*Big THANKS to **Kathryn Ragains** and **Joe Calme** for representing us at Hope for Creation meetings. If you are interested in getting more involved with Hope for Creation on behalf of the congregation, please contact the office.*

# RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

The Youth Group put their Unitarian Universalist values into action last month by attending the ongoing Portage Kids Peaceful Protest in support of Black Lives Matter in front of City Hall one Sunday afternoon rather than having their usual virtual meet-up.

The day was sunny and warm. The group gathered on the corner was welcoming. The atmosphere was cheerful. People chatted and young kids played.

We had made hand-painted signs to hold up as cars whizzed by us on Westnedge and Centre roads. The horrific Atlanta-area mass shooting earlier in the week had led organizers to expand the focus of the protest to include solidarity with the Asian community so 'Stop Asian Hate' signs were raised next to 'Black Lives Matter' ones. People beeped their horns and waved in support. It felt good, for the most part.

Protest organizer, Sara Beaver Vogel, had warned us that not everyone who drove by would be so nice. I had made a point to prepare the kids for the possibility that they might get yelled at or flipped off. Having attended numerous protests over the last few years in rural Northern Michigan, against Muslim bans, against family separation policies, against acts of terrorism against people of color in my community, to name a few, I had been on the receiving end of a fair bit of profanity and vitriol from passersby. I know what people can be like. I thought I was prepared.

And then, this sweet-looking grandma-type woman rolled down her window, slowed her car to a crawl, and began to scream at our kids, her face distorted by anger. It felt like I had been punched in the gut. She didn't use swear words. I could barely understand what she was trying to say but I could see and feel her rage. I worried as I stared at the woman in stunned silence, that I had done the Youth Group a great disservice by encouraging them to protest and exposing them to such ugliness.

There is, of course, no way to undo what has been done. I can only hope that the moment of discomfort proves to be an opportunity for learning and growth for both me and the kids. It certainly drives home the importance of taking a stand against racism when you are right there facing it down. The experience has also awakened a sense of curiosity and concern as we ponder what would cause someone to respond in such a way. What is the true source of her anger, her fear? What is the loving kind response? These questions are not easy. Living our values is not always easy.

Living our values does have its upside too. I would rather be on the side of One Earth, One Family, United than spewing rage and fear from my car window any day. May it always be so.





# CALENDAR



## APRIL 2021

DAY	DATE	EVENT	TIME
Thursday	April 1	Thoughtful Thursday—Thematic Exploration	7:00 PM
Friday	April 2	Stewardship Committee Meeting	1:00 PM
Sunday	April 4	Easter with Rev. Gy After Service Coffee Hour	10:00 AM 10:45 AM
Tuesday	April 6	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	April 7	Board of Trustees Meeting	5:30 PM
Thursday	April 8	Moral Decision Making	7:00 PM
Friday	April 9	Women's Book Group	1:00 PM
Sunday	April 11	Happy Anniversary 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
Tuesday	April 13	Qigong	9:00 AM
Tuesday	April 13	Civil Conversations Small Group	7:00 PM
Wednesday	April 14	Sunday Services Committee	5:30 PM
Thursday	April 15	Thoughtful Thursday—Rose, Thorn, and Bud	7:00 PM
Saturday	April 17	Men's Group Virtual Breakfast	8:30 AM
Sunday	April 18	Sustainability Sunday with guest, Erin Augustine After Service Coffee Hour Budget Forum Meet-Up for Youth	10:00 AM 10:45 AM 11:30 AM 1:00 PM
Tuesday	April 20	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	April 21	NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	12:00 PM
Thursday	April 22	Earth Day Thoughtful Thursday—Movie Discussion	7:00 PM
Sunday	April 25	No Feeling is Final with guest, Rev. Erin Walter After Service Coffee Hour Meet-Up for Youth	10:00 AM 10:45 AM 1:00 PM
Tuesday	April 27	Qigong	9:00 AM
Thursday	April 29	A Conversation with Jennifer Teed	7:00 PM

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

**UU Community Church  
is served by:**

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**2020-2021 Board of Trustees**

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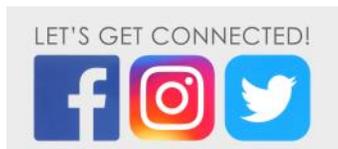
**The next Newsletter Deadline is  
Wednesday, April 21 at NOON**

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

*CommUUnity Matters*

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**SPIRITUALITY FOR  
DIVERSE PATHS**

**BLACK LIVES MATTER**