



CommUUunity Matters

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest Michigan

June 2021

JUNE SERVICES

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

June 6: *Flower Communion* with Rev. Gy

Each June we celebrate Flower Communion, the uniquely Unitarian Universalist celebration of beauty, human uniqueness, diversity, and community. We also take time to officially welcome our newest members and recognize our volunteers. Please join us as we celebrate our community and our interconnectedness.

June 13: *Journey Towards Knowledge* with UUC Youth

As our church year comes to an end we take time to celebrate our young people and the gifts they bring to our community. We will also honor the Coming of Age transition of our graduating senior, Grayson Tasko, as he begins a new phase of his journey through life.

June 20: *Are We There Yet?* with Rev. Gy

Have you caught a glimpse of the light at the end of the Covid tunnel? Can you feel the shift of energy? We seem so close to being able to resume our usual activities, but we are not quite there yet. As we hover in that in-between space let us devote ourselves to building resiliency and finding joy to help us get through what will come next.

June 27: *Sunday Morning at General Assembly* with the 1st Universalist Church of Minneapolis

One of the silver linings of virtual church is that distance and expense are no longer impediments to participating in denominational events like General Assembly (GA). The Sunday Morning Worship at GA is certain to be the largest gathering of UUs joining together in virtual worship this year. Join us via Zoom to be part of it. This service will not be streamed on our Facebook page.

Our Spiritual Theme for June is:



June at UU Community Church is all about celebration. It is when we pause and take stock of all we have accomplished in the last twelve months. As we celebrate our successes, both small or large, we soak up joyful energy so we can use it to do the work that remains to be done.

If you are not sure you have any successes to celebrate consider how Ralph Waldo Emerson framed it:

*What is success? To laugh often and much;
to win the respect of intelligent people
and the affection of children;
to earn the appreciation of honest critics
and endure the betrayal of false friends;
to appreciate the beauty;
to find the best in others;
to leave the world a bit better,
whether by a healthy child, a garden patch,
or a redeemed social condition;
to know even one life has breathed easier
because you have lived.
This is to have succeeded!*

Take time to celebrate YOU and all you do!

REVOLUTION

A Revolutionary Year

As we approach the end of the church year, the Sunday Services Committee is reflecting on the past year. It was certainly a challenging year for several reasons. Because of COVID-19, we had to pivot to virtual services. While not ideal, this did come with opportunities to experience services that would have otherwise been outside our means or abilities to present.

We started the year by recognizing the birth of our nation with a look at the consequences of slavery and how it still impacts our nation by viewing 'The 1619 Project' by the New York Times. Then Rev. Gy introduced our theme for this year, REVOLUTION, and how we could use this theme to explore a variety of Unitarian Universalist spiritual practices.

As summer, and the pandemic, was in full swing we explored The Rule of St. Benedict with Rev. Canon William Spaid to see how a 6th-century guide to living in community can apply today. Then we heard from two former members of our youth group, Adel and Tess Johnson, to hear how the pandemic is impacting the delivery of social services and studying abroad and how this may affect us as we return to normal.

Stacey Ledbetter and Sholanna Lewis taught us about policing, incarceration, and how the revolution to change in these areas starts with us working to heal our community. Marcus Winchester shared how the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians used ingenuity to avoid being uprooted by the 1830 Indian Removal Act. Laura Randall, from the UU Service Committee, kicked off our successful 'Guest at Your Table' campaign with a recorded sermon. River Artz-Iffland talked about Coming Out and opportunities for growth. Darby Fetzer told us about courageous conversations and Rev. Larry Farris gave us firsthand insight into revelations from the murder of George Floyd.

Rev. Harold Beu shared a thoughtful sermon series based on the Serenity Prayer. We celebrated the Winter Solstice with a lovely service led by Miriam Epskamp with participation from several of our members featuring words and music as a guide from Darkness to Light.

J. Barrett Lee welcomed the New Year with a message exploring the possibilities of a meaningful life in the midst of chaos. Donna Odom looked deeper at the roots of racism and what we can do to start healing. Wendy Fields taught us the origins of the NAACP chapter in Kalamazoo and its impact. We watched a truly inspiring recorded message by Brittany Packnett from the UUA Ware Lecture series. Kimberly Ridley led a discussion by members highlighting the important civic responsibility of jury duty. Dr. Melanie Davis honored 20 years of UU's Our Whole Lives sex education program. Dr. Michelle Johnson talked about Kalamazoo locations with significant layers of cultural empowerment.

Erin Augustine was with us again during our Earth Day celebration and was joined by members inspired by her to form our own Sustainability group. Rev. Erin Walter told us how we can endure feelings of isolation while embracing moments of love and joy with words and music in her service 'No Feeling is Final'. As the pandemic closed live music venues, we were able to virtually visit the homes of several talented performers who would otherwise have been out of our reach: the duo Stowegood, Tret Fure, Daniel Nahmod and our Music Director, Nick Sienkiewicz.

Throughout the year Rev. Gy has kept us focused on our theme of Revolution by addressing the sub-themes suggested by our committee, Willingness, Inspiration, Courage, Curiosity, Oppression, Trust, Diversity, Love, Compassion, Community, Hope, Grief, Tradition, and Celebration.

The Sunday Services committee was pleased with the diversity and quality of services we were able to provide during this Revolutionary year. We are already working on a theme for next year and feel up to the challenge of whatever our new normal may bring. ~ Joe Calme, Regena Nelson, and Kimberly Ridley

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Registration for the 100% virtual **General Assembly 2021: Circle 'Round for Justice, Healing, Courage** is open and there is still time to commit to taking part in what is sure to be the largest online gathering of UUs this year. General Assembly is a time to circle 'round in community, in care and healing; for liberation and justice; and for love and courage. Registration info and a listing of available workshops can be found at <https://www.uua.org/ga/registration>



There are also opportunities for non-registrants to participate in GA. Several worship services and all general sessions are open to the public and can be watched from the Unitarian Universalist Association website: <https://www.uua.org/ga/off-site/2021>

General Sessions (June 23-27): Watch as the business of the Association is conducted in real-time.

Candidate Forum and Informational Session (June 24 at 5:00 PM): A discussion between the two candidates for the contested Board of Trustees seat, moderated by the Election Campaign Practices Committee, with time for Q&A.

Synergy Bridging Worship (June 25 at 7:00 PM): Come be inspired and illuminated at a multi-generational celebration and rite of passage for high school seniors that will include brilliant contemporary musical performances. The service includes a collection to benefit the Katie Tyson Fund for Youth and Young Adult Ministry.

Service of the Living Tradition (June 24 at 7:00 PM): Led by the Ministries and Faith Development Staff Group, this service honors fellowshiped and credentialed religious leaders; remembering those who have died, recognizing those who have completed active service, and welcoming those who have received fellowship or credentialed status in the past year. The service includes a collection to benefit the Living Tradition Fund.

Sunday Morning Worship (June 27 at 10:00 AM): See page 5 for more information.



Get ready to Circle 'Round...



FROM THE MINISTER



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

A few days ago a friend of mine died. He and his partner had been together for 52 years!!! What a heartbreaking loss. Tom can hardly remember life before Don. The funeral was held in the Unity church parking lot. Naturally, I attended.

This is the first time since Covid that I attended a larger gathering (not including a couple of Black Lives Matter rallies). I knew a lot of the people in attendance as they were either friends we had in common or are members of the Unity church where I also used to attend. It was mostly a group of friends and acquaintances, as well as

some people I never met.

Let me preface this story by stating that I am an extrovert. Here is something from the Web: “Do you love meeting new people? Does a big social event leave you feeling energized and renewed? If you can answer yes to these questions, then there is a possibility that you might be an extrovert”. Yes, and yes!

Then why was I filled with anxiety the entire time I was at this funeral? I have always been outgoing, have always loved being around people yet something was different this time. I cannot say that I have a definitive answer why I had all this anxiety, but I can take a stab at it:

- Covid has changed our social landscape and I may have gotten too used to either being alone or being with just a very limited number of people at any time.
- Perhaps in the course of these nearly two years I’ve become more introverted (it can happen).
- The CDC has changed the rules around mask-wearing and many ditched their masks and perhaps I was negatively affected by it.

While Covid has surprised us time and again, current trends indicate that we are likely to return to our church building in the near future. On the extremes, to some it couldn’t happen soon enough, while others are experiencing tremendous anxiety, with a variety of feelings in the middle.

Returning to our physical building may not be as easy as we once would have anticipated. We are complex beings and separation of such length has affected us in ways we may not be aware of. I certainly would not have expected to experience anxiety by attending a funeral. I wasn’t even officiating, I was only in attendance. I knew most of the people and I like them all. I am baffled by my reaction. I still haven’t been able to pinpoint the reason. Pre-Covid this just never happened. If anything, I would have been looking forward to catching up with some folks I rarely get to see. Not this time.

I suspect my experience is not going to be unique.

When we do return to in-person meetings, let us be sensitive and perceptive to our own needs. For some of us, this isolation functioned as a hard reset and perhaps this is what it took for us to realize what our true preferences are. It is okay to allow for change. It is okay to honor a shift in likes and dislikes. Your church leadership welcomes you to speak into your needs and we will do our very best to accommodate you.

When we do return to in-person meetings, let us be sensitive to each other. Allow for changes in boundaries in the other, allow for shifts in likes and dislikes in the other. They, too, have been changed by this experience. It is my hope and wish that we won’t take these changes personally.

(More on page 5)

FROM THE MINISTER

Some of us may feel the need to social distance way past the CDC recommendations, some may not. Some of us may want to wear a mask way past CDC recommendations, some may not. Our UU principles call us to honor such differences and make room for them.

Some of us may want to maintain a virtual presence way into the future and we ought to make that possible as well. We've learned that quite a bit of coming together is possible in this virtual world, it would behoove us to accommodate for that as well. I suspect that we are going to maintain and strengthen a robust virtual presence going forward. It is the way of the future.

As we are preparing to return to our physical building, may we walk gently and kindly with each other. Just like one can never step in the same river twice, we, too, have been changed. One thing, however, remains – the LOVE and COMMITMENT we feel for this community and one another. I know that that very LOVE will guide us in our coming together and in our new ways of being.

And so it is.



Recognizing the importance of shared ministry and the many innovative approaches to worship created by congregations during the pandemic, UUA President, Rev. Dr. Susan Frederick Gray, selected the **First Universalist Church of Minneapolis** to serve as worship leaders for this year's GA Sunday Morning Service.

First Universalist has been a model of shared ministry and what it means to put the work of dismantling white supremacy and building anti-racist, anti-oppressive practices at the center of their ministry. They have been on the front lines in support of the Movement for Black Lives in Minneapolis, bringing spiritual care and moral leadership in the wake of George Floyd's murder by police and the important uprisings for justice that followed.

Children and families are a vital part of their ministry, and they have been using creative approaches to engage all ages in worship during the pandemic. Their leadership exemplifies some of the best practices for the creativity, spiritual depth, and moral leadership that are possible when we embrace the work of shared ministry rooted in love and justice.

Last year more than 10,000 screens tuned in to watch the Sunday Morning Worship at GA! UU Community Church will be sharing the service via Zoom on **Sunday, June 27, 2021, at 10:00 AM**. We encourage YOU to be part of this year's largest Sunday morning gathering of Unitarian Universalists by participating in this wonderful, communal event. We will not be live streaming the service to Facebook but will share the link to the Unitarian Universalist Association's YouTube channel for those who cannot join us on Sunday morning.

CARING COMMUNITY



JUNE CARING COMMUNITY NEWS

When you do things from your soul, you feel a river moving in you, a joy.

~Rumi

June, so the ads tell us, is for Grad and Dads. We send our best wishes to all the UCC fathers. We hope your special day is wonderful!

We send our hearty congratulations to our UCC grads:

Grayson Tasko from Portage Central

Judy Pigg-Behrendt's grandson **Zachary Angell** from West Ottawa High School

John and Beverly Folz's grandson **Sam** from Yale

We send our joyful regards to **Rita Stevens, Judy Pigg-Behrendt, Darby Fetzer, Brent Ridley, and Bob McWhorter** all of whom are celebrating June birthdays. Many happy returns of the day!

For the first time in many, many months people are venturing out into the world with more confidence and less fear. **Joe and Nancy Calme** hosted friends and family at their farm. **Steve Tasko** and **Denise Sonier** dined out at a restaurant to celebrate their anniversary. **Ken and Barb VanEselte** traveled to Chelsea to spend time with family. **Judy Halseth** and **Herb Gross** attended a lake association annual meeting. **Rev. Gy and Patti** had a Memorial Day weekend backyard barbeque. The **Nelson family** took a trip to Chicago. These little things, hardly worth noting before Covid19, have taken on special meaning during the pandemic. As our lives return to normal, may we continue to cherish and celebrate the small joys in our lives.

Miriam Epskamp is excited to be traveling to California this month to see her daughter **Ellie** for the first time since the pandemic began. **Erin Michael** is also planning a trip to see family. She will be spending time with her father **Ken** in New Mexico.

Erin is excited that her daughter, **Kelin Michael**, will be closer to home this summer to do research in the Newberry Collections in Chicago as part of a Fellowship she has been awarded. Wouldn't it be lovely if we get to see Kelin too?

Jon Vanderberg, who moved to Boston a few years ago to be near family, surprised us all by zooming in to a Sunday Service last month. It was so good to hear his voice and know that he is doing well.

Stace Danielson and **Bob McWhorter** continue to be under a doctor's care and **Judy Pigg-Behrendt** is recovering from foot surgery. Please send healing thoughts their way.

Many in our community have been mourning losses in the last few weeks. **Larry Higgins** lost his exuberant, loving, and differently-abled sister **Nyoda** in late April. **Pat Fuehr's niece Caroline** suffered a devastating miscarriage. **Mark Wheeler**, husband of former member **Denise Hartsough**, passed away following a boating accident. Mark was an influential figure in American Powerboat racing and shared his love of the sport with daughter **Laura Wheeler**. You can read several moving tributes to Mark at Race-Day-Live.com. A memorial service for Mark will be held at Covered Bridge Farm Park in Three Rivers on Friday, June 25 at 10:00 AM. *(Continued on page 7)*

CARING COMMUNITY

Former member **Bill Boyer** passed away surrounded by family on May 25. Many of us cherish memories of Bill's time at UUCC - the stories he would tell about his veterinary practice, his pragmatic outlook on life, the work he did as part of the Building and Grounds Team, and the generous way he shared the bounty of his beautiful vegetable garden with us. There will be a memorial service for Bill on Tuesday, June 1 at 1:00 PM at Langeland on Centre Ave. Our hearts are with all who grieve.

The Caring Community column will go on sabbatical in July. In the meantime be sure to share your joys and concerns with the office for publication in the Weekly Email.

Caring for one another, on the other hand, never takes a break. If you, or someone you know, requires support of any kind, please contact one of our point persons: Nancy Crowell 599-1235, Rita Stevens 330-0376, Judy Oliver 353-9397, or Nancy Stob 349-8890. Sharing is Caring!

Men's Group Breakfast

Pending Board of Trustees approval, the Men's Group plans to meet in-person for a real breakfast on **Saturday, June 19 at 8:30 AM** at [Burger Town Grille](#), 9136 Shaver Road (just south of Meijer).

Men's Group Breakfast is a wonderful opportunity for conversation and connection and is open to all UUCC members and friends.

As no one wants to drive all the way out to south Portage to have breakfast alone, it is **very important to RSVP** and let breakfast coordinator, Ken VanEseltine, know you are coming. Please call (269) 342-4793 or email vaneseltinekl@sbcglobal.net by Friday, June 18. You can also contact Ken if you have any questions.

If there are no RSVPs by Friday afternoon, the gathering will be canceled. An email will be sent out to let everyone know.

As Covid19 safety is still a serious concern, it is strongly recommended that only fully vaccinated persons participate in this event.



Water Communion 2021

[Water Communion](#) is a unique Unitarian Universalist ritual traditionally held at the beginning of the church year that serves to remind us of our interconnectedness and celebrate our gathering together as a community.

If you would like to participate in UUCC's 2021 Water Communion, you are invited to collect a small sample of water from a special place you visit over the summer to add to a communal bowl in September.

If you are lucky enough to be able to travel, the water can be from a lake, river, or ocean you pass along the way. If you are staying close to home bring water from a pond, a fountain, or a backyard hose. The important part is that the water represents a place or experience that gives meaning to your life or provides sustenance for your soul.

Although it is still uncertain if we will be ready in September to gather in-person in our building, we do hope to be able to arrange some sort of ritual that allows us to mingle our waters in a meaningful way.

If you have any questions about Water Communion, please contact Rev. Gy

LEADERSHIP



Board President's Corner

From [Nancy Calme](#)

This is my last newsletter article as the Board President. I am a writer at heart, and so have enjoyed this way of communicating with all of you. Once the new board elects its officers and they take office on July 1, they may or may not continue the practice of offering monthly newsletter articles. It is not a requirement. I just want to take a moment to thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve you as President and to share my thoughts through this medium.

Serving on the board or on a committee or task force for UUCC is both an honor and an act of love and service. We are not a business; we are primarily a volunteer organization with a few paid professional roles supported by our gifts of funding and our freely given time and talents. What an investment it is, with what meaningful and fulfilling returns!

Most of our members have served in other organizations that mean a lot to them, as well. Putting one's time where one's heart lies is a way of showing what matters to us and keeps the wheels turning in positive directions. I like to think that at the end of my life I will be able to look back and see that, in doing my part, I made the world a little better.

Next year at UUCC will be much different than these last two difficult ones. We don't know exactly how it will change and how quickly. I wonder as much as the rest of you. Be sure to attend the **Re-Opening Forum on June 15 at 7:00 PM** to share your thoughts on this.

It is an act of faith to look to the future and plan when there are so many unknowns. I think that, before the winter of 2020, we were blissfully unaware of just how many unknowns were lurking out there. Now I have a new respect for that big question mark hanging over the future. I also have more confidence in the ability of our congregation to react and adapt to whatever comes.

Let's step out into it together.

- 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 (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 or 269- 271-8851)



COVID TASK FORCE

Re-Opening Forum—June 15 at 7 PM

UUCC Covid Task Force was formed to monitor public health data and best practices in order to reopen the church in a way that balances public health, church liability, the need for community, and inclusion.

Members of the task force are Pat Fuehr, Judy Oliver and Steve Tasko. The group is reviewing the existing documents from the Board of Trustees on building use and Covid 19 protection during the pandemic. Also monitored are UUA documents and public health statistics pertinent to Covid 19.

As you may be aware the CDC guidelines have dramatically changed in the last weeks. The task force needs your input on opening the church in a responsible, yet inclusive manner.

As you reflect, consider the following questions:

- *What have you learned about the church experience in the last year?*
- *What principles do you believe are at the center of our congregation?*
- *What challenges did you as an individual, or church participant, overcome in the last year?*
- *How would you like the church experience to look going forward?*

A special Zoom meeting will be held on **Tuesday, June 15 at 7:00 PM** to give everyone an opportunity to share their thoughts on this important issue.

2021 Guidance For UU Gatherings



Key Principles for Multi-platform Operations

- 1. Root decisions in the values of inclusion and consent.**
- 2. Follow the science.**
- 3. Go slow and be flexible.**
- 4. Be realistic with expectations of ourselves and others.**

If you feel more comfortable sharing in an e-mail, you may send your thoughts to any of the task force members.

It would help to share before the meeting in June so those views can be included (anonymously) in the live discussion.

In Community,

Pat Fuehr

patricia.fuehr@wmich.edu

Judy Oliver

jholiver55@gmail.com

Steve Tasko

stevetasko@gmail.com

FROM THE FINANCE TEAM

A Note about Pledges

The 2010/2021 programming and fiscal year are almost complete. If you made a financial pledge for the year spanning July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, you should receive an email from Kimberly Ridley on 6/7/21 with your giving statement to date attached. If you do not receive the email, please contact Kimberly at ridleyk@hotmail.com or 269-569-3658.

To match pledges and church income in the same financial year, it would be helpful if you can remit all pledge dollars by the end of June. If you make a payment *after* June 30 for the 2020/2021 year please note "20/21" in the memo line of your check. If you are prepaying (before July 1) on your 2021/2022 pledge, please note "prepay 21/22" in the memo line.

As always, please review your records and let Kimberly know if you find any discrepancies which require correction. Your contributions and donations are sincerely appreciated.



Turn in Your Receipts

The church fiscal year ends on June 30. If committees have any expenses that need to be paid or reimbursed for the 2020-21 fiscal year, please turn in your receipts to Joe Calme (uucommunityfinance@gmail.com) no later than July 5.

Thank you! UCC Finance Team: Tami Brozovich, Joe Calme, and Tami Brozovich

Financial Giving to UCC

Our lives have been graced by many gifts. If you desire and are able to donate to our church, which still has the same expenses as pre-Covid 19, there are a few ways to do that.

- **Mail checks to the church, 10441 Shaver Road, Portage, MI 49024.**
- **Give to UCC from your smartphone! Download the free GivePlus Mobile app from Google Play or Apple's App Store. Find Unitarian Universalist Community Church and select the one in Portage, Michigan.**
- **Open a browser, type in the church website, www.uucommunitychurch.org, and click on the DONATE button in the middle of the page.**



**GIVE
PLUS⁺**

If you would like assistance, please give Kimberly a call at 269-569-3658 and she'll walk you through the steps.

Your donations are sincerely appreciated and allow us to continue carrying our life-giving message into the wider world.

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! Sponsoring Pride Rainbow Flag program and Open House Theatre! Youth donating to support KPS student!

Moving toward gathering! Completion of Welcoming Congregation Renewal! Education, engagement and action on pandemic feelings, sustainability, mushroom forays, finding your truth with nutrition and more! Bring your voice to our next meeting on **Sunday, June 13**.

Opportunities Abound!

- **2020-21 Church Strategic Goal updates:**
 - o #1 *Technology*: Steve is a member of the Covid Task Force as the tech advisor and continues to work out needed equipment for hybrid services.
 - o #2 *Landscape/Building*: Plans are being made for fall planting in the Shaver Rd. flower bed. No new building updates. Want to help? Contact Andy or Eric/Kevin.
 - o #3 *Adult Enrichment*: All events are well-attended, and engagement is high! Check our website, weekly emails, and newsletter for dates/times for events on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays! Invite friends to join in!
- **Annual Meeting** Took place on Sun, 5/23 after service – Members adopted the 2021-22 budget, and elected new Board members, Andy Miller, Eric Nelson, and Judy Pigg– Behrendt, and new member of the Nominating Committee, Nancy Calme.
- **Youth Group** – Donating \$200 from their Youth Fund to the Next Step program to support a KPS student prepare for college. Asking for donations totaling \$200 to support an additional student. Make donations to UCC with “Next Step” identifier or “Youth Fund Donation”
- **Covid Response Task Force**: Will collect your input during a special meeting on June 15. They will be looking at UUA guidelines for ideas for safe opening. Watch for more details in weekly emails.
- **Pride / OutFront Kalamazoo**: Pride event is virtual this year. UCC is sponsor of their Pride Flag program! Check it out on their website [HERE](#). Program Council attendees unanimously agreed to donate \$200 to this program.
- **Buddy Benches: Cap Collection Continues**: Donated 65 lbs. to date! Freya gives to lady in Plainwell, then to Goshen, IN, then to Green Tree Plastics in Evansville, IN! Check out their website [HERE](#) for details on cap types, photos of benches, etc. It takes 400 lbs. to make one bench!
- **Summer Fundraiser**: Stewardship and Rev. Gy will host a church fundraiser picnic at Rev. Gy’s home with entertainment! Learn more on page 14.

See you on Sunday, June 13, 11:00 AM on Zoom! Darby has stepped up to lead! Treat her well!



Thank you for all you do! Stay well!

LEARNING AND GROWTH



Thoughtful Thursdays

Each Thursday evening we offer 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 Thursday—THEMATIC THURSDAY

Our gathering on **June 3** at **7:00 PM** will be an exploration of celebration and joy as a spiritual practice. Brene Brown has noted, "Without exception, every person I interviewed who described living a joyful life or who described themselves as joyful, actively practiced gratitude and attributed their joyfulness to their gratitude practice."

Please come prepared to share the things, people, and experiences you have been grateful for this past year. Other questions we might consider:

What is your definition of celebration and joy?

What brings you joy even when you are discouraged?

What about celebration makes you feel comfortable?

Are there parts of celebration and joy that are a challenge for you?

Second Thursday—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 **June 10** at **7:00 PM** is **Charity**. (See below for more info.)

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. Details for our June guest are still being finalized (see page 14) Please save the date, **June 17**, and watch the weekly email for more details.

Fourth Thursday— CANCELED

There will be no gathering on **June 24** because of General Assembly.



What Are Our Obligations to the Poor?

At our next **Moral Decision Making Lecture and Discussion Group** on **Thursday, June 10** at **7:00 PM**, we will explore the great philosophers' views of charity and poverty.

We know that most of the world's religious traditions advocate giving money to the poor, but what do other, nonreligious thinkers have to say about charity? The lecture from Clancy Martin Ph.D. returns to Aristotle before introducing you to the worldviews of Andrew Carnegie and Peter Singer, both of whom may challenge what you think you know about charity and the poor.

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 a Drag Queen

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. Details are still being finalized for our June visitor, but it is hoped in honor of Pride month that we will be joined by a local drag queen (or king).

Drag is a performance art that can inspire creative thinking, break down stereotypes, and allow us to see traditional concepts of male and female differently.

Drag queens and drag kings are performers who offer exaggerated, performative presentations of gender and often cross-dress performatively. Cross-dressing and drag are not necessarily tied to erotic activity or sexual orientation. Though it is true that some drag queens are transgender women, the majority of drag queens are cisgender and take part in the art form because it offers them a creative outlet.

A conversation with a drag queen will be a unique opportunity for us to learn more about this important part of LGBTQ+ culture and to build bridges of understanding. If we are unable to schedule this gathering in June we will try to get it on the calendar later in the year.

Civil Conversations—DATE CHANGE

The UUCC Civil Conversations Group usually gathers on the second Tuesday of each month, with curious and loving hearts, to learn how to engage in Civil Conversations with family, friends, and others to authentically build a more Beloved Community.



Their June meeting will instead take place on **Tuesday, June 22 at 7:00 PM**. We hope many of you will be able to join in the discussion. Newcomers are always welcome. Watch the Weekly Email for information about the agenda. Click [HERE](#) for the Zoom link. Contact [Darby Fetzer](#) if you have any questions.



Qigong at UUCC

Qigong sessions will continue to meet on Tuesday mornings at 9:00 AM throughout the summer (including July).

Often described as a mind-body-spirit practice, Qigong may help improve your mental and physical health by integrating posture, stretching, movement, breathing, self-massage, and focused intent. Each session lasts about 30 minutes.

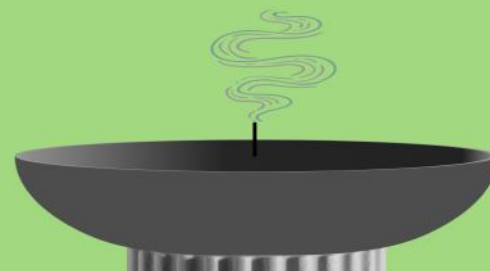
Practicing Qigong on Zoom means you don't have to drive anywhere or even change out of your jammies to attend the class. Once the exercises start, everyone turns off their mics and video so you practice in private. The group is a supportive community that chats a bit at the beginning and end of the exercise routine.

This Tuesday will be a GREAT day for you to join us! Newcomers are always welcome.

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

JULY SABBATICAL

CLOSED FOR
SPIRITUAL
MAINTENANCE



There will be no regular Sunday Services at UU Community Church during the month of July. Please use the time away to rest and recharge. Regular services will resume on August 1.

There will be no Thoughtful Thursday gatherings during the July sabbatical. Small groups and committees may choose to meet (or not). Please watch your email for up-to-date information.

Several in-person, outdoor special events are being planned by various individuals and groups. Please save the date for:

Chat and Chill on Kathy Hay's Porch—Saturday, July 10

Backyard Broadway and Barbecue at Rev. Gy's—Sunday, July 18

'Sunrise' Lakeside Service hosted by Kathryn Ragains—Sunday, July 25



**Backyard Broadway and Barbecue
at Rev. Gy and Patti's home
5126 Meadowlark Lane, Portage, MI 49024
Sunday, July 18, 2021**

5 PM: Dinner—grilled burgers (vegetarian available)
and brats with side dishes

6 PM: Broadway tunes performed by
Farmer's Alley actors

7 PM: Yard games and conversation

Suggested fundraiser donation at the door:
\$20 per person or love offering

Rain date: Sunday, July 25, 2021

RSVP to Regena Nelson:
nelsonr@wmich.edu by Sunday, July 11.

Guests are welcome. The backyard is shaded. We'll have tables set up for eating. Please bring your favorite beverage and a chair. We will get your input on song suggestions to send to Farmer's Alley before the event. Because Farmer's Alley is kindly allowing us to go above the 15-person audience limit covered by the fee for the performance, there will be a tip jar for the actors.

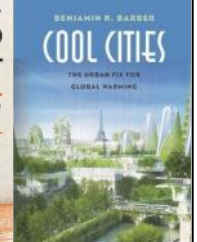
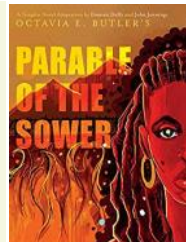
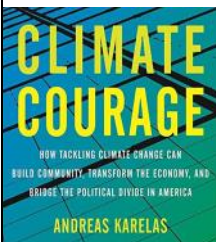
SUMMER READING



Climate Change Reading List

The Women's Book Group is on their usual summer hiatus. If you are looking for some interesting reading material in place of their usual excellent suggestions, consider some of the titles on this Climate Change Reading List compiled by Kalamazoo Climate Crisis Coalition (KCCC). KCCC hosts a Climate Change Book Club that meets once a month on the second Tuesday. Click [HERE](#) to learn more about KCCC and its many programs devoted to combating Climate Change.

- ***Climate Change from the Streets: How Conflict and Collaboration Strengthen the Environmental Justice Movement*** by Michael Méndez (2020).
- ***Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st Century Economist*** by Kate Raworth (2017)
- ***The New Climate War: The Fight to Take Back Our Planet*** by Michael Mann (2021).
- ***Climate Courage*** by Andreas Karelas (2020)
- ***This Is an Uprising*** by Mark and Paul Engler (2016).
- ***Our Final Warning: Six Degree of Climate Emergency*** by Mark Lynas (2020).
- ***A Climate Carol: And Other Cli-Fi Short Stories*** by Richard Friedman (2018).
- ***The Right to Be Cold*** by Sheila Watt-Cloutier (2018).
- ***Winning the Green New Deal: How We Must, How We Can*** by Varshini Prakash & Guido Girgenti (2020).
- ***The Story of More*** by Hope Jahren (2020).
- ***Carbon Criminals Climate Crimes*** by Ron Kramer (2020).
- ***An American Marriage*** by Tayari Jones (2018).
- ***Parable of the Sower*** by Octavia Butler. (1993).
- ***We Are the Weather: Saving the Planet Begins at Breakfast*** by Jonathan Safran Foer (2019).
- ***The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming*** by David Wallace-Wells (2019).
- ***Odds Against Tomorrow*** by Nathaniel Rich. (2014).
- ***Learning to Die in the Anthropocene: Reflections on the End of a Civilization*** by Roy Scranton (2015).
- ***Climate Justice*** by Mary Robinson. (2018).
- ***Can We Price Carbon?*** By Barry Rabe(2018).
- ***Zeitoun*** by Dave Eggers. (2010).
- ***The Great Derangement*** by Amitav Ghosh. (2016).
- ***Cool Cities: Urban Sovereignty and the Fix for Global Warming*** by Benjamin R. Barber (2017).
- ***Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness*** by Richard Thaler (2009).
- ***Storming the Wall: Climate Change, Migration, and Homeland Security*** by Todd Miller(2017).
- ***The Water Knife*** by Paola Bacigalupi (2016).
- ***The Climate Swerve: Reflections on Mind, Hope, and Survival*** by Robert Jay Lifton (2017).
- ***Tropic of Chaos*** by Christian Parenti (2011).
- ***Climate Change and Natural Disasters*** by Vinod Thomas (2017).
- ***Don't Even Think About It*** by George Marshall (2015).
- ***This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate*** by Naomi Klein (2014).



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.

In May they were joined by special guest Steve Bertman from Hope for Creation. Hope for Creation is the SW Michigan chapter of Interfaith Power and Light, a national advocacy group that inspires and mobilizes people of faith and conscience to take bold and just action on climate change. Steve shared a presentation about installing an electric vehicle charging station at UCC and the Sustainability Group is very interested in exploring how they could help make this happen. Click [HERE](#) to view Steve's slide show and [HERE](#) to watch a presentation he did with Paul Pancella about electric vehicles.

The group also brainstormed other projects that could demonstrate our congregation's commitment to sustainability. Their ideas included:

- Remove asphalt from the parking lot and plant trees
- Install solar panels
- Plant a community garden
- Help expand recycling to underserved communities
- Help the congregation and community explore a plant-based diet

At the next meeting of the Sustainability Group, we will be joined by Tom Hackley from People's Church to talk about the solar panels they recently installed. Come be part of the conversation!

The Sustainability group will meet on **Monday, June 21 at 7:00 PM**. Newcomers are always welcome.

COMING OF AGE

A Coming of Age Celebration

Unitarian Universalist Community Church is proud to announce that **Grayson Tasko**, son of Denise Sonier and Stephen Tasko, has completed our Coming of Age program for high school seniors.

Coming of Age, a six-month long program focused on religious exploration and self-reflection, is the way our church community marks the transition of our young people into adulthood.

Grayson has been meeting with a mentor since January for a series of conversations about his values, beliefs, and personal spiritual journey. He will share the insights he has garnered from these discussions with us during the service on **Sunday, June 13**, and as a community, we will acknowledge the beginning of this new stage in his life.

Congratulations, Grayson!



SOCIAL JUSTICE

Gun Violence Awareness

June 4 is National Gun Violence Awareness Day. You can wear orange to show your support and/or you can get involved with groups in our community working to prevent gun violence:

[ISAAC Gun Violence Prevention Task Force](#)
[Moms Demand Action— Kalamazoo Area](#)

And/or contact your [elected officials](#) and call on them to support gun-sense legislation.



Juneteenth 2021

Kalamazoo is offering up many ways to celebrate Juneteenth, the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States.

Kalamazoo Valley Museum is teaming up with Soul Artistry LLC to host an online Juneteenth **Celebration of Freedom** on **June 19** at **1:00 PM**. This family-friendly event will commemorate the history of Juneteenth and feature live music, poetry, dance, and visual artists. Visit kalamazoomuseum.org to learn more.

The Black Arts and Cultural Center and the Kalamazoo Public Library are presenting several events on **June 19** as part of their **Juneteenth Celebration 2021** including virtual paint parties for kids and adults and a showcase of locally Black-owned businesses. Visit kpl.org for more details.



JUNE IS PRIDE MONTH

In-person events are not possible again this year given ongoing Covid-19 safety concerns, so OutFront Kalamazoo will be celebrating Pride Month with a calendar of virtual events and activities.

UUC is the sponsor of the online **Pride Flag Gallery**. Click [HERE](#) to see what Pride looks like in Kalamazoo. You may see some familiar faces!

PRIDE & JOY - A Celebration of Intersectional Storytelling will take place on **Wednesday, June 16** at 8:00 PM.

#LivingOutFront, a conversation with openly transgendered Delaware State Senator Sarah McBride, on **Thursday, June 24** at 8:00 PM.

Rev. Gy is helping plan the OutFront Faith Alliance **Pride Interfaith Service** on **Sunday, June 27** at 3:00 PM. Rev. Gy tells us that Daniel Nahmod will be zooming in from California to provide special music!

Visit [OutFront Kalamazoo](#) for more information about these virtual events.

To help support these events and OutFront Kalamazoo's mission to create a just, inclusive, equitable, and supportive environment for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions in Southwest Michigan, UUC will hold a **Generosity Sunday** collection **throughout the month of June**. We hoped to be joined by an OutFront representative at our June 6 Sunday Service.

You can donate to OutFront by mailing a check made out to UUC (memo line should indicate Generosity Sunday) or online on the UUC website by choosing "Generosity Sunday" on our [Donate](#) page.

Covid-19 has helped us to remember that a building does NOT make a church; people make a church. The work of being an LGBTQ+ Welcoming Congregation falls to each of us individually. Supporting OutFront Kalamazoo financially and attending their virtual events are ways you can show Kalamazoo that UUC has #PRIDE. Thank you for your support!

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

As the church year comes to an end, I have been looking back on all we have accomplished. It was a pretty good year, I think. We have much to celebrate...a vibrant small group ministry, interesting Thoughtful Thursdays, fantastic Zoom Sunday Services, a long list of social justice activities, and more!



But, after all is said and done, what I am most grateful for, what I want to celebrate the most as the year winds down, is definitely the kids in the Youth Group. They have been my rock this year. They showed up almost every Sunday. They willingly participated in almost every crazy activity I dreamt up for them. They lifted my spirits and inspired me.

I am grateful for Nick Tasko. His honesty, willingness to be vulnerable and share parts of his authentic self with others, and his deep empathy have reminded me to let down my defenses and open my heart.

I am grateful for Amanda Nelson. She is smart, creative, full of ideas, and has a willingness to speak her mind and cheerfully participate. As an added bonus she gets my sense of humor and often laughs at my jokes. She reminds me to be generous of spirit.

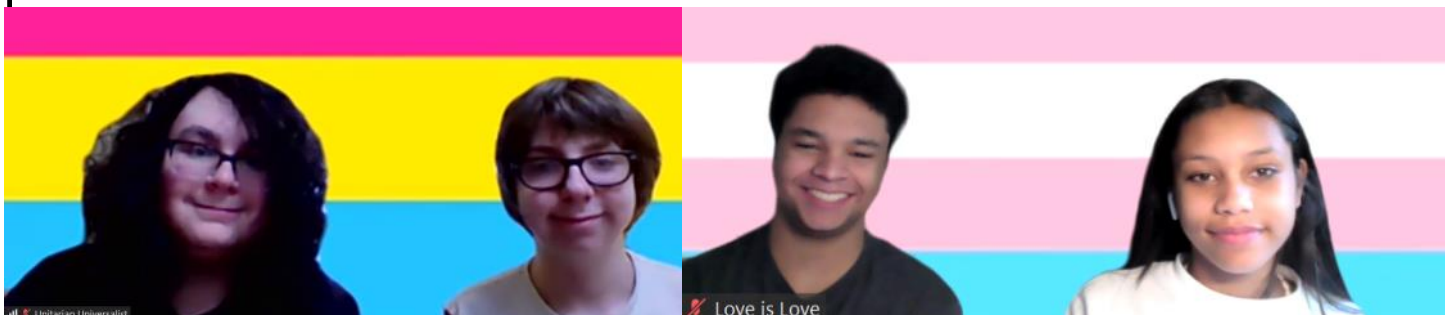
I am grateful for Grayson Tasko. His questioning mind and skeptical nature have kept me on my toes. Every time I think I have him figured out, he says or does something that surprises me. Grayson reminds me to do my research and never to make assumptions.

I am grateful for Matthew Nelson. One of the bright spots of Zoom Youth Group was that Matthew was easily able to participate as a freshman in college. Matthew's thoughtful insights, careful way with words, and ability to center of kindness in his response to the world inspire me to be more compassionate.

The kids at UUCC make me want to be a better person! I feel so privileged to be able to spend time with them each week. They bring me great joy! Of course, I understand that the weekly Meet-Ups for Youth that I enjoy so much don't happen in a vacuum. It takes a village. I am grateful to Denise Sonier, Steve Tasko, and Regena and Eric Nelson for whatever encouragement they give to their kids to keep them participating. I am grateful to Rev. Gy for their unwavering support and trust. I am grateful to Nancy Calme, the Board of Trustees, and the H.R. Team for the care they have taken to make sure I am fairly compensated and not in danger of burning out. And I am grateful to YOU for the ways you support UUCC and make it possible for me to serve this community.

All is not perfectly rosy in the Youth programs and we will need to have hard conversations in the coming months about what needs to change, but for now, let us celebrate all that is right and good.

May it be so.





CALENDAR



JUNE 2021

DAY	DATE	EVENT	TIME
Tuesday	June 1	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	June 2	Board of Trustees Meeting	5:30 PM
Thursday	June 3	Stewardship Committee Meeting Thoughtful Thursday	1:00 PM 7:00 PM
Sunday	June 6	Flower Communion with Rev. Gy After-Service Coffee Hour Meet-Up for Youth	10:00 AM 10:45 AM 1:00 PM
Tuesday	June 8	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	June 9	Sunday Services Committee Meeting	5:30 PM
Thursday	June 10	Moral Decision Making	7:00 PM
Sunday	June 13	Journey Toward Knowledge with UCC Youth After Service Coffee Hour Program Council	10:00 AM 10:45 AM 11:00 AM
Tuesday	June 15	Qigong Covid Task Force Re-Opening Forum	9:00 AM 7:00 PM
Thursday	June 17	Thoughtful Thursday	7:00 PM
Saturday	June 19	Men's Group Breakfast	8:30 AM
Sunday	June 20	Are We There Yet? with Rev. Gy After-Service Coffee Hour	9:00 AM 10:45 AM
Monday	June 21	Sustainability Group	7:00 PM
Tuesday	June 22	Qigong Civil Conversations	9:00 AM 7:00 PM
Wednesday	June 23	NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	12:00 PM
Sunday	June 27	Sunday Morning at General Assembly After-Service Coffee Hour	10:00 AM 10:45 AM
Tuesday	June 29	Qigong	9:00 AM

**WE GATHER AS A WELCOMING,
CARING COMMUNITY TO
NURTURE MIND AND SPIRIT,
CELEBRATE DIVERSITY,
AND WORK FOR JUSTICE.**

**UU Community Church
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2020-2021 Board of Trustees

Nancy Calme

Erin Michael

Darby Fetzer

Larry Higgins

Freya Lake

**The next Newsletter Deadline is
Wednesday, June 23 at NOON**

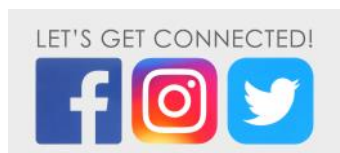
Please send submissions to:

uuccnewsletter@gmail.com

CommUUnity Matters

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**SPIRITUALITY FOR
DIVERSE PATHS**

BLACK LIVES MATTER