



# CommUUunity Matters

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest Michigan

November 2021

## NOVEMBER SUNDAY SERVICES

Sundays at 10:00 AM

Also [on Facebook](#)

and [Zoom](#) Meeting ID: 926 5154 8494 Passcode: 286763

### November 7:

#### ***A Time for Everything*** with Rev. Gy

Humans tend to think of ourselves as above and apart from nature. When we resist the natural cycles of life we end up with disharmony. How can we restore balance and harmony in our lives and in the world?

### November 14 :

#### ***Hills to Die On*** with Rev. Gy

The holidays sometimes bring us together with family and friends who have different world views than our own. How can we maintain balance and harmony in our personal relationships?

### November 21:

#### ***Power, Partnership, and Change*** with Rev. Mary Katherine Morn

Join the UUCC Youth Group as they help us kick off ***Guest at Your Table***, our annual fundraiser for the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC). This service will feature a pre-recorded sermon from Rev. Mary Katherine Morn, President and CEO of the UUSC.

### November 28:

#### ***Living in Harmony: Easier Sung Than Done*** with David Roth

This morning our special guest David Roth will sing and speak about how to bring about harmony through thought, intention, and action in a complicated world.



### Spiritual Theme for November: **HARMONY**

According to the dictionary, HARMONY is an orderly or pleasing combination of elements in a whole; a relationship in which various components exist together without destroying one another.

Each person's definition of an orderly, pleasing, and peaceful co-existence will look a bit different, depending on situation, stage of life, values, and relationships but there are some commonalities.

HARMONY is...finding the sweet spot where your life feels like it is working well and comfortably holding both that you love and that which you need.

HARMONY is...finding balance in relationships with family, friends, and others where you are able to reach out with love and are received in love, where you listen deeply with compassion and in turn are listened to, where you work to build bridges between the divisions.

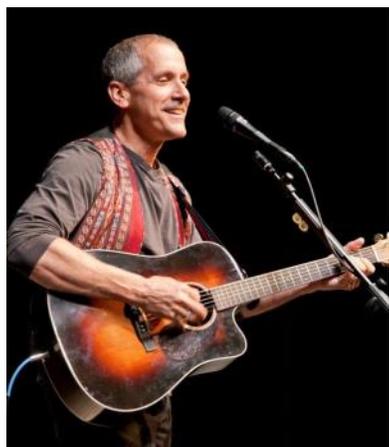
HARMONY is finding a way to live softly on this fragile planet that we share with countless other living organisms and billions of other people, living simply so others can simply live.

As you weave your Tapestry of Life, what role will HARMONY play in your design?

# GUESTS IN THE PULPIT

***We are excited to welcome these special guests to our virtual pulpit:***

**Rev. Mary Katherine Morn** was appointed President and CEO of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) in May 2018. She previously served as the Director of Stewardship and Development and Special Assistant to the President for the Unitarian Universalist Association. Previous to her denominational service, Mary Katherine served as senior minister of the UU Congregation of Fairfax, at Oakton, VA, and helped grow small, mid-size, and large congregations in five different states. Mary Katherine's husband, John Rakestraw, is Director of Center for Teaching Excellence at Boston College and their son Caleb is a senior at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota.



**David Roth** strikes many chords, hearts, and minds with his unique songs, offbeat observations, moving stories, sense of the hilarious, and powerful singing and subject matter. As a singer, songwriter, recording artist, keynote speaker, workshop leader, and instructor, David has earned top honors at premier songwriter competitions – Kerrville (TX) and Falcon Ridge (NY) – and taken his music, experience, and expertise to a wide variety of venues in this and other countries full-time for three decades. David has also taught singing, songwriting, and performance at the Augusta Heritage workshops, SummerSongs (NY – where he currently serves as Executive Director), Common Ground on the Hill (MD), the Woods Dance & Music Camp (Canada), WUMB's Summer Acoustic Music Week (NH), Moab Folk Camp (UT), Rowe Center (MA), Pendle Hill (PA), Lamb's Retreat (MI), the Swannanoa Gathering (NC), the National Wellness Institute (WI), and for many other songwriting groups and associations around the country.

At Thoughtful Thursday on November 18 at 7:00 PM, we will be joined by speaker, minister, leader, coach, consultant, and facilitator, **Martha Creek**. Martha is more interested in being present to those she is serving than in talking about what she has accomplished, and her accomplishments are enormous. They include a bachelor's degrees in Accounting, Human Resources, and Organizational Management, as well as a graduate degree from Emerson Theological Seminary. She has also attended the Hoffman Institute, Byron Katie International School, Healthy Congregations and Family Systems, Lombard Mennonite Peace Center Mediation Skills and Conflict Resolution program, Transcendental Meditation, Reiki, and more. In addition, Creek has served in a ministerial role in both Religious Science and Unity Churches. Martha's mission and vision is as concise and clear as she is—*“Go within or go without”*.



# FROM THE MINISTER

## From the Minister

[Rev. Gy Ludvig-McCartney](#)

*Generous Orthodoxy:*

*The willingness to give up tradition for the betterment of someone/something.*

The term Generous Orthodoxy was coined by the German theologian Hans Frei. It is an oxymoron, of course. Orthodoxy literally means to conform to tradition, to that which is already established and approved. To be generous is to be open to change. Frei thought the best way is right down the middle. Honor tradition while fostering change.

In theory, it sounds good, reasonable, and possible. Then you become a minister and learn that nothing could be farther from the truth.

Allow me to tell you the story of a once energetic, thriving Hungarian church. It was established at the turn of the twentieth century by immigrants from the motherland. You'd think once they left the country of their birth they would have wanted all things new, but that could also not have been farther from the truth. In fact, they strived to re-establish everything they loved about church at home, implemented traditions they were familiar with from long ago, an ocean away. It helped them feel grounded, gave them a sense of home. They "imported" the first of many ministers from Hungary and thus the little congregation was established and it began to grow.

New waves of immigrants came to the town that was home to our little church. Each wave brought different ideas, new traditions. Each generation wanted what they wanted when they wanted it. They had one thing in common, though, they were all sure that their way was THE way!

And there was CONFLICT!!! Conflict gave way to INDIGNATION! "Oh, how dare they! How dare johnny- come-lately suggest we change how we do church? After all we've done! We established this church with our sweat and blood! We sacrificed! When we were making little money, we still spared some to build a church, to bring a minister and now they, these newcomers want to have a say, make changes? How dare they?"

The newcomers on the other hand also wanted to feel at home at our little church and they couldn't. They couldn't, because they didn't feel welcomed, appreciated, listened to. Their contributions were discouraged unless they were financial.

Well, they were not having it. So, they did what most people would who are not skilled in critical and crucial conversations, they picked up their toys and left. They built a church one block down the road. It sounds crazy, because it was. How can a relatively small immigrant community support TWO Hungarian churches? And ONE BLOCK apart?! Crazy!

Time went on and the first church dwindled and eventually closed its doors for good. The second church lived on. When the first church closed down, a few of the members moved over to the new church, but most of them would not get over the hurt of the divorce and just stayed away.

Now, new waves of immigrants came again. Some from Hungary, some from Transylvania, all Hungarians nonetheless. And yes, you guessed it. (Continued on page 3)



# FROM THE MINISTER

They brought new ideas of what church should be like, look like, feel like.

You'd think the generation who once felt slighted at the old church would have been generous with the newcomers when they pushed for change. But they weren't. They were just as unyielding as the founding members of the first church. And there was CONFLICT again. Again, and again.

Long story short, the second church is no more. The members dispersed, lost connection with each other. Their children were so disgusted with the infighting that as soon as they became independent would never step foot in either church. This is the story of not one, but two churches that never learned Generous Orthodoxy.

Now, I don't think it is easy to change. In fact the older I get the harder it seems to be. I am becoming more and more a creature of comfort and I just don't want to be bothered. So, I understand the origin of conflict between the well-established and the emerging. And yet... (You knew there'd be a YET!!!)

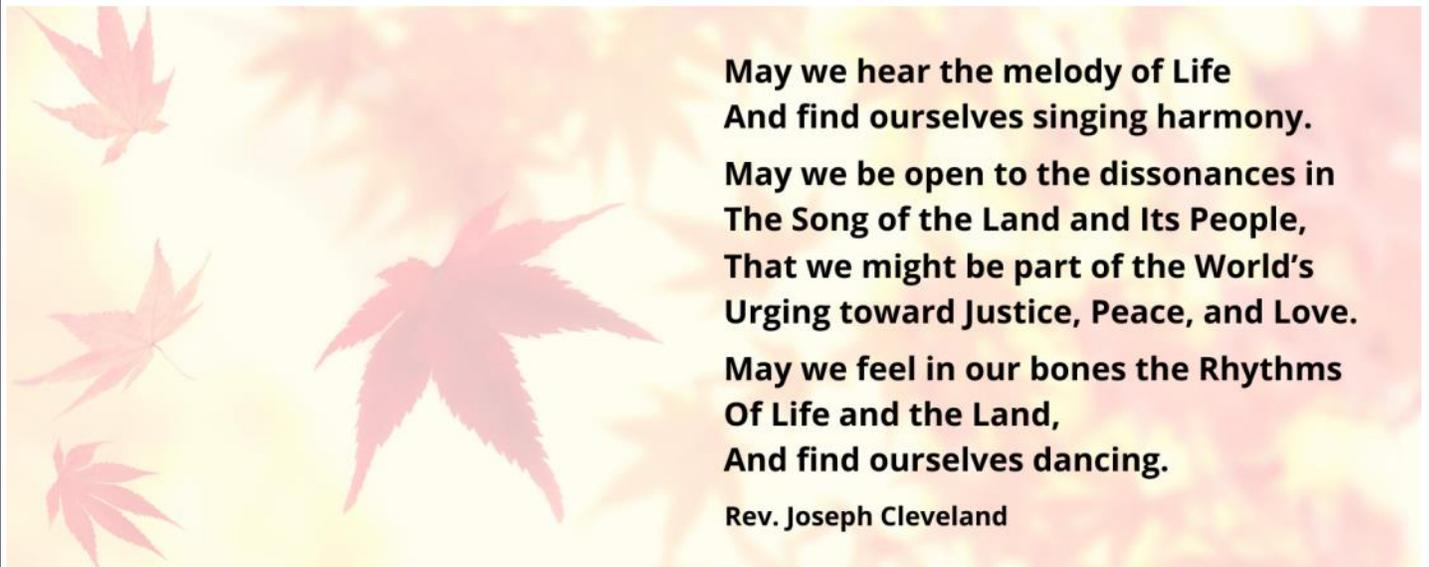
In life nothing is stagnant. The healthy grows, the other withers. In Nature, everything is in a CONSTANT state of change. In fact, I really resent it right about now when I have to deal with all the fallen leaves and will resent it even more when I'll once again push snow off of my driveway. My point is we are changing anyway. Might as well do it graciously, generously.

Some changes are happening on a very personal level, deciding whether to keep up the old house or downsize? Change jobs or stay? Which school to go to? Etc, Etc. Other changes involve the collective. They may involve our beloved church community.

How can we embrace new ways of "doing" church while also honoring tradition? And how can we do it gracefully and generously?? What would we like our legacy to be? Are we part of the unyielding generation who would not embrace the new? Or are we the ones who make the future of our church solid and possible because we figure out how to live into Generous Orthodoxy?

I don't know the answer, but I do know that it will determine our future.

And so it is.



**May we hear the melody of Life  
And find ourselves singing harmony.**

**May we be open to the dissonances in  
The Song of the Land and Its People,  
That we might be part of the World's  
Urging toward Justice, Peace, and Love.**

**May we feel in our bones the Rhythms  
Of Life and the Land,  
And find ourselves dancing.**

**Rev. Joseph Cleveland**

# CARING COMMUNITY



## NOVEMBER CARING COMMUNITY NEWS

*A choir is made up of many voices, including yours and mine.  
If one by one all go silent then all that will be left are the soloists.  
Don't let a loud few determine the nature of the sound.  
It makes for poor harmony and diminishes the song.*

— Vera Nazarian

### Gratitude

Thanksgiving is nearly here. As the hymn says, “For all that is our lives, we give our thanks and praise!” We are grateful for all the wonderful volunteers that work so hard to keep this church community running smoothly. We give thanks for our dedicated Board of Trustees (**Eric Nelson, Darby Fetzer, Judy Pigg-Behrendt, Freya Lake, and Andy Miller**) who went the extra mile to put together a plan to let us open the building; for the fabulous Stewardship Committee (**Regena Nelson, Joe Calme, Marsha Laya, and Ron Crowell**) who on an amazing virtual auction in October; for the hardworking Finance Team (**Tami Brozovich, Joe Calme, and Kimberly Ridley**) who pay the bills, balance the books, and helped us to secure and pay off two PPP loans that kept us solvent during the pandemic; and for the awesome Tech Team (led by **Steve Tasko**) who helps us present great services in-person and online at the same time. There are more people we could recognize but our space is limited. The Caring Community Team is particularly grateful to **Nancy Calme** for joining the group. Going forward, she will be in charge of all our written communication. We send our thanks to **Marsha Laya** for helping write this month’s news and to the lovely **Rita Stevens** for all the help she has given us in the past. We wish Rita all the best on the next steps of her journey.

### Happy Birthday!

The tradition of celebrating birthdays allows us to recall how lucky we are that we can count you as one of our special friends. Thank you for sharing your life with this **community Liam Michael, Stephanie Grathwol, David Senecal, and Hayden Tasko**. Both UUC and the world are better places because you were born!

### Remembering Special Friends

To live in the hearts of those we love is to know eternal life. This month we take time to remember those who shared their love and their lives with us. May you find yourself smiling as you recall the joy of having known **Theresa Hollowell** who left us in November of 2014. We also fondly remember our pet and plant-loving friend, **Jim Heveran**, who passed away on October 1, 2021. You can read Jim’s obituary by clicking [HERE](#).



Jim Heveran

### Welcome

We are so glad to have been joined by new visitors in the past few weeks. A hearty UU Community Church welcome goes out to **Nicky Leigh, Jeannine Willacker, Sarah Sorvas, Jon Crandall, and Michael Graham**. We hope to see you again soon!

### Sharing is Caring

If you or someone you know, requires support of any kind, please contact one of our Caring Community point persons: Nancy Crowell 599-1235, Judy Oliver 353-9397, Nancy Calme (269) 271-8851, or Nancy Stob 349-8890.

# STEWARDSHIP

## Halloween Service Auction a Spooktacular Success!

Thanks to all those that participated in our 2021 Zoom Halloween Service Auction and Costume Contest! Congrats to Miriam for Funniest Costume, Joe for Scariest Costume, and Freya for Most Creative Costume!



A special thanks to our auctioneer Rev. Gy for their talent in getting high bids for our items. We appreciate the donation of all of your creative auction items. We are thrilled to announce that after expenses, we raised \$ \$6,465.60. This was our most successful service auction!

We appreciate Ron for making phone calls to each of you to confirm your auction items and attendance. We are grateful to Lauren, Joe, and Nancy for their detailed work on recording bids. We are always thankful for Miriam’s tech support to keep our events running smoothly.

Joe Calme emailed the full list of auction purchases and personal invoices to everyone. The complete list of who bought what can be found by clicking [HERE](#). Please submit payments by mailing a check to UUCG or by credit card through the Vanco App choosing Auction/Fundraiser fund.

We are deeply grateful to all the people who made this year’s auction a success.

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

## Spooky Halloween Fun at UUCG



# STEWARDSHIP



**Guest at Your Table (GAYT)** is the **Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC)** annual intergenerational program to raise support for and awareness about key human rights issues. Since UUSC works in more than 20 countries, with over 50 grassroots partners, there are thousands of individuals involved in and who benefit from the work that your donations make possible. The program is an opportunity to celebrate grassroots partnership, support human rights, and learn about just four of these individuals – the “guests” in Guest at Your Table.

This year’s GAYT theme is **Now is the Time for Courageous Change**. The injustices and crises of the past year have underscored the importance of our shared goal – a world free from oppression, where all can realize their full human rights. They also have emphasized just how big a task that is. To meet the enormous challenges of today and build a more just future, we need big ideas and bold change. We must fundamentally transform the way things are, so that we do not perpetuate systemic inequities and repeat the harms of the past.

The UUSC believes that the transformational solutions come from communities most directly impacted by injustice. This year’s Guest at Your Table program will help you learn what UUSC partners are doing to address immediate injustices – as well as what they envision for the future. At this extraordinary juncture in history, listening to their stories will offer inspiration and guidance on the path toward justice.

You will have an opportunity to hear these stories when we kick off the Guest at Your Table program on **Sunday, November 21**. Our Youth Group has stepped up to coordinate this service. They are eager to introduce you to Axel Fuentes, an activist supporting the rights of migrant and refugee workers facing unjust working conditions in midwestern U.S. meat processing plants; to Myra Dahgaypaw who uses her experience as a survivor of previous Burmese military junta violence, to amplify the voices of Burmese ethnic minorities facing military brutality today; Cristian Guzmán Merlo who is helping revolutionize farming practices and gender justice in northern Nicaragua; and Maina Talia who is mobilizing along with the community of Kioa Island in the Pacific to secure a resilient future in the face of climate change.



You can lend your support to the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee by making a donation to the Guest at Your Table campaign in one of two ways: Mail a check with ‘Guest at Your Table’ in the memo line to the church building at 10441 Shaver Rd, Portage, MI 49024 OR use the Vanco Mobile app or the donate button on our website to give electronically. Please make sure to choose Guest at Your Table’ in the menu. Thank You!

Click [HERE](#) to learn more about this year’s guests!

# LEADERSHIP



*Here are a few things the board did at their October meeting:*

- They finalized policies and procedures in preparation for the October 24 re-opening.
- They heard a report from a meeting with a marketing consultant about how to improve our visibility and outreach.
- They heard a report from Rev. Gy about the need to replace a member of the Committee on Ministry due to a resignation.
- They voted to earmark \$500 from the Memorial Fund to pay for the Thoughtful Thursday Speakers Series.
- The next regular Board meeting will take place via Zoom on **Wednesday, November 3** at 6:30 PM. Board meetings are open to anyone who would like to attend. A link to the Zoom meeting can be found on the [UU Community Church online calendar](#).



**UUC Youth Group at the  
Bronco Football Game 2021**

# PROGRAM COUNCIL

## Program Council—Where **TOGETHER**—We Get Stuff Done!

Who is a member of Program Council?? YOU! If you attend our services and/or other gatherings, you are a member of Program Council! What do we do at Program Council? We discuss and plan programming which fulfills our Mission and Vision. We discuss events and activities in the wider community in which we will participate as a congregation and share opportunities for ways to volunteer, create connection, and support each other in these endeavors. We work to transform ourselves, our community and the world! But...Program Council only works if YOU participate. Please plan to attend our November meeting.

There was a lot to **CELEBRATE** at our October meeting! Women's Book Club, Men's Group Breakfast, Sustainability Group, Civil Conversations Group all had successful meetings in September. Qigong is going strong every Tuesday morning. Author Ruth Fishel shared her inspirational life story at a Thoughtful Thursday gathering. LifeLine rented the building for health screenings. The Youth Group had a bonfire to celebrate the autumnal equinox. Church Life is GOOD!

Looking to get more involved with UU Community Church? Check out these **OPPORTUNITIES!**

- Meet-up for Youth - Select Sundays at 1:00 PM (via Zoom)
- Qigong - Tuesdays at 9am (via Zoom)
- November Thoughtful Thursdays (via Zoom) at 7:00 PM
  - 1st Thursday—Moral Decision Making—Lecture and small group discussion
  - 2nd Thursday—ISAAC Virtual Banquet
  - 3rd Thursday – Thoughtful Thursday Speakers Series - Rev. Martha Creek
  - 4th Thursday— Thanksgiving—No Gathering
- Civil Conversations Group—Tuesday, November 30 at 7:00 PM
- Sustainability Group—Monday, November 15 at 7:00 PM
- Volunteer!
  - The Connections Team - Contact Miriam Epskamp
  - The Greeter Team - Contact Darby Fetzer
  - Thoughtful Thursday Speakers Series Team - Contact Rev. Gy
  - Congolese Family Team - Contact Denise Sonier
  - Technology Team - Contact Steve Tasko



**IN THE WIDER COMMUNITY**—Show up for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the Portage Kids Peaceful Protests - Every Thursday and Sunday —12:00 PM in front of Portage City Hall.

On the **AGENDA** for November's Meeting

- Setting a date for decorating the church for the holidays
- Giving input about a Christmas Eve Gathering
- Approving MUUSJN Dues

We hope to see you at the next Program Council Meeting on **Sunday, November 7** at around 11:00 AM. We will meet in-person following social hour. We hope to make this meeting available for those attending the service virtually too. Send agenda items and celebrations to Program Council chair, [Darby Fetzer](#).

And as always 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. Click [HERE](#) for the Thoughtful Thursday Zoom link. Meeting ID: 476 401 695 Passcode: 449120

### First Thursday—MORAL DECISION MAKING

Our gathering on **November 4 at 7:00 PM** month will feature a short lecture and a group discussion of thorny ethical questions. The topic for exploration this month is Privacy (See below for more info.)

### Second Thursday—ISAAC VIRTUAL BANQUET WATCH PARTY

The second Thursday, **November 11 at 6:00 PM** you can join us in the church Zoom room to attend the Interfaith Strategies for Advocacy and Action in the Community (ISAAC) Banquet and hear the keynote address from Rev. Dr. Michael Eric Dyson. You can also watch the program on ISAAC's Facebook Page and website. More information about this event is on [page 18](#).

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

Once a month we invite a special guest to join us to engage in conversation and answer our questions on a variety of topics. We are delighted to welcome speaker, minister, leader, life coach, and consultant, Rev. Martha Creek on Thursday, **November 18 at 7:00 PM**. Many of us had the pleasure of meeting Martha several years ago when she helped facilitate our Mission and Vision Appreciative Inquiry and we are looking forward to hearing her thoughts about how we can bring more harmony to our lives. You can learn more about Martha on [page 2](#).

### Fourth Thursday - THANKSGIVING

There will be no Thoughtful Thursday gathering on November 25. Please include everyone in our UUC family in your Thanksgiving thoughts and prayers.

## The Ethics of Privacy

At the next meeting of our **Moral Decision Making Lecture and Discussion Group** on **Thursday, November 4 at 7:00 PM**, we will explore the ethics around privacy as we consider the rules for respecting personal space, property, and information.

In today's world, technology has complicated the ethics of interpersonal relationships—especially in the realm of privacy. How much privacy are we entitled to? How do intrusions into our privacy affect our freedom and autonomy? Join us to reflect on the arguments for giving up some privacy for security, as well as the dangers of giving up too much.

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. Meeting ID: 476 401 695 Passcode: 449120



# SUSTAINABILITY

## Finding Joy Through a Smaller Environmental Foot Print

Each month the Sustainability Group meets to reflect on their personal sustainability journeys, to share their successes and failures, and to explore ideas for promoting sustainable living at UCC and in the wider community.

At their last meeting they shared the following resources:

- ◆ [Naturally Norms/Carlson Farms, Copper Ridge Market](#) - locally sourced/humanely raised beef, pork and poultry in Lawton, MI
- ◆ Hardings at Woodbridge is taking orders for holiday turkeys from Ottos Chickens.
- ◆ Wiley's Farm-Veggies on U at 1335 West Ave is a good source of locally grown produce
- ◆ Visit [Kalamazoo Climate Crisis Coalition](#) and [Hope for Creation](#) on YouTube for recordings of interesting programs given by our local advocacy groups
- ◆ Call to sign up and invest in Consumer's Solar Garden program to help offset your 'dirty' energy use. The direct phone number to sign up for the Consumers Energy Solar Blocks: 866-683-0705



Combating Climate Change has been in the news lately as the world prepares for the UN Conference on Climate Change in Glasgow, Scotland that will run from October 31 thru November 12. At our next meeting on **Monday, November 15 at 7:00 PM**, the group will spend some time discussing what happened at the conference and how it might impact our personal and community sustainability goals.

Click [HERE](#) for the link for the Sustainability Group Zoom Meeting.

Meeting ID: 960 9812 1445 Passcode: 990641

Newcomers are always welcome to join this small group. If you have any questions about the Sustainability Group, contact [Miriam](#).

## Fridays for the Future

The Kalamazoo Climate Crisis Coalition (KCCC) has re-started their Fridays for the Future meetings on the 2nd and 4th Fridays of each month (except holidays) at noon via Zoom. Log on during your lunch break for high-quality and informative sessions focused on combatting Climate Change!

On the agenda for November 12:

- ◆ City of Kalamazoo's Sustainability Plan
- ◆ Kate Miller from 350.org
- ◆ KCCC Action Campaign

All are welcome!

Click [HERE](#) to join the Fridays for the Future Zoom Meeting.



## Our Cap Collection Continues...

Now that our building is finally open again we can set out a container for all the hard plastic caps you have been collecting. Look for it in the Community Room.

We will accept caps of all sizes and colors for our collection. This plastic will be saved from the landfill and used instead to make "buddy benches" that will be placed on school playgrounds as a way to encourage friendship and empathy and to stop bullying. We are glad UCC members and friends are supporting this 'CAP'ital idea!

# CIVIL CONVERSATIONS

## Civil Conversations Group

The Civil Conversations Group at UUCC is dedicated to helping participants learn the skills that will help them engage in meaningful conversations with family, friends, and others to authentically build a more Beloved Community.



At their last meeting on October 28, the group discussed “How to Have Civil Conversations with Family and Friends During the Holidays” then engaged in a practice Civil Conversation around the topic of Universal Income.

It was a rousing discussion as participants respectfully shared differing perspectives.

Having Civil Conversations is a new practice for many of us who didn’t talk about contentious topics growing up and did not have this respectful art modeled for us. Civil Conversations Group is a great opportunity to develop these skills to make our corner of the world more welcoming for conversation and to expand the aperture on the lens with which we see the world.

Next month, on **Tuesday, November 30 at 7:00 PM** we’ll see a short, but poignantly powerful video where people in a very Red/Blue divided town sit down and respectfully discuss some of the most contentious topics imaginable.

Next, we’ll share about Civil Conversations we had over the Thanksgiving table and lastly, enter into our Civil Conversation practice with a discussion about ***Gun Ownership and Regulation***.

Please invite your friends with varying perspectives. Darby and Miriam work to intentionally create a safe space by following our Civil Conversation’s guidelines and intervening if necessary. Please join us for this transforming experience!

Click [HERE](#) for the Zoom Link for Civil Conversations; Meeting ID 940 8302 4154 Passcode: 867302

If you have any questions about this group please contact Darby Fetzer at 269-569-5557 or [darbylynnfetzer@gmail.com](mailto:darbylynnfetzer@gmail.com).

## What does it take to have a Civil Conversation?

- ◆ *Bravery*: To engage a potentially contentious topic.
- ◆ *Curiosity*: To ask open-ended questions and learn something new.
- ◆ *Humility*: Recognizing we don’t know everything.
- ◆ *Deep Listening*: Listen to understand and to learn rather than to respond.
- ◆ *Constructive Engagement*: Instead of looking for common ground and commonalities, try to fully understand the complexities of another’s viewpoint even though you may disagree strongly. The goal of a civil conversation is neither to persuade nor debate, only to build better understanding.
- ◆ *Letting Go of Pre-conceived Ideas*: Empty yourself from agenda and outcomes and be willing to be transformed by the experience.

# CONNECTION

## Women's Book Group

**Friday, November 12**

**1:00 PM via Zoom**

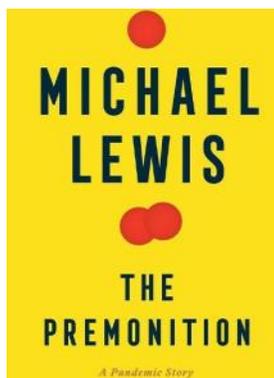
All are welcome to join in the discussion at the next meeting of the Women's Book Group.

November's Selection:

**The Premonition:**

**A Pandemic Story**

by Michael Lewis



From Goodreads:

*For those who could read between the lines, the censored news out of China was terrifying. But the president insisted there was nothing to worry about.*

*Fortunately, we are still a nation of skeptics. Fortunately, there are those among us who study pandemics and are willing to look unflinchingly at worst-case scenarios.*

*Michael Lewis's taut and brilliant nonfiction thriller pits a band of medical visionaries against the wall of ignorance that was the official response of the Trump administration to the outbreak of COVID-19.*

The Book Group will meet at 1:00 PM on November 12 via Zoom for a short business meeting followed by a discussion led by Judy Halseth.

Click [HERE](#) to join the Book Group Zoom Meeting Meeting ID: 996 0783 5644 Passcode: 360981

Visit the [Book Group Page](#) on our website for information about future book selections.

If you have any questions about Book Group, please contact chairperson [Stephanie Grathwol](#).

## Qigong at UCC

Looking for a way to cultivate more peace and HARMONY in your life? Learn Qigong!

Qigong is low-impact exercise that helps relax your body and mind.

There may be other health benefits too. A 2013 article in The Wall Street Journal, *The Intriguing Health Benefits of Qigong*, reported that studies have found that Qigong helped to improve balance, lowered blood pressure, fought depression, and improved quality of life for some practitioners.

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

Meeting ID: 697 338 090

Passcode: 138550



If you have any questions about the Qigong group, please contact [Freya Lake](#).

## Men's Group Breakfast

The Men's Group will meet for breakfast on **Saturday, November 20 at 8:30 AM** at Burger Town Grille, 9136 Shaver Rd in Portage.

EVERYONE (regardless of gender identity or expression) is welcome to come to breakfast. Don't miss this opportunity for good food, good company, and good conversation!



If you plan to come, please RSVP to breakfast coordinator, Ken VanEseltine, (269) 342-4793 or [vaneseltinekl@sbcglobal.net](mailto:vaneseltinekl@sbcglobal.net) by noon on Friday, October 15.



# RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION

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



Last month was so inspiring for me! I had the opportunity to hear the wisdom of some young Unitarian Universalists and young aspiring activists in our community. It was good! The first opportunity came when I sat down with the Youth Group to talk about Feminism. I was impressed by their understanding and their insights as we discussed the difficulties faced by women and girls in this country and around the world and to need to lift up the experiences of BIPOC and trans women as we explore the history and past achievements of the Women’s Movement and challenges it faces going forward. I was proud of them for choosing to take action in the community by hosting Postcard Party focused on the threats posed to women’s reproductive health by the actions of the Michigan legislature and to women’s lives by Climate Change. Thank you to everyone who supported their effort.

The next opportunity came on a Thoughtful Thursday when we were joined by Roddy Biggs from the UU Mental Health Network. Roddy came to Unitarian Universalism as a teenager and now, at just 23, he is attending seminary in hopes of becoming a UU minister. He shared with us a vision of the future where our congregations are places where *everyone* regardless of income, mental health struggles, sexual orientation, gender expression, racial identity, or cultural background feels seen, valued, and loved. Roddy strongly believes that we will build this Beloved Community because when he looks around at his classmates in seminary, that is exactly what he sees. People with a wide range of identities and backgrounds committed to working towards a vibrant and inclusive UU future.

The third opportunity came when our friends at Portage Kids Peaceful Protest and their partner organization Portage Lift Our Voices reached out and asked members of our congregation to attend a Portage School Board meeting and stand in solidarity with young leaders from Portage Central’s Justice Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) committee. Rev. Gy and I attended (in rainbow stole and scarf) and gave enthusiastic applause and thumbs up to all the young people who addressed the board. They were demanding better support for students who are girls, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, or living with disabilities and better representation of these identities in the school curriculum. One young woman claimed that although she was a junior, she had not once been assigned a book in her English classes written by anyone other than a white man! I was impressed by the poise and courage displayed by the JEDI speakers and encouraged by their willingness to speak out and demand change.

The one thing that all these young people have in common as they take on challenges in their schools, in their places of worship, and in society at large is their understanding that maintaining the status quo is not in their best interest. In the words of UU theologians, Erika A. Hewitt and Julica Hermann de la Fuente: ***The status quo is not radically inclusive. The status quo is not Beloved Community. The status quo is never going to get us free.***

Those of us who find the status quo to comfortable may find ourselves in conflict with the younger generation as they strive for more inclusion. Finding curious and careful ways to engage our discomfort about new

and different ways of thinking and doing may ease the transition. For if we can realize their hopeful vision of what can be possible when we widen our circle of concern and build a Beloved Community that benefits us all, the struggle will have been worth our while.

NOVEMBER R.E. SCHEDULE		
DATE	ACTIVITY	LOCATION
November 7	Preparation for GAYT Service	Zoom
November 14	Preparation for GAYT Service	Zoom
November 21	Guest at Your Table (GAYT) Youth-Led Service	In-person at UUC or via Zoom
November 28	No Meet-Up this Week	N/A

# FAITH IN ACTION

*Empowerment of an immigrant family from the Congo is one of the ways UU Community Church puts our UU faith in action. Jean, Francoise, Kwizera, James, Teddy, and Amelia arrived in Kalamazoo from a refugee camp in Rwanda in January of 2019. The team of UUCC volunteers who offers support to the family is led by Denise Sonier.*

What a difference three years has made in the lives of the refugee family from the Congo! They have made amazing progress despite having to suffer through the isolation and uncertainty of a global pandemic for *half* the time they have been in America. These days, they are successfully managing most aspects of day-to-day living.

Both the parents are working full-time for JBS Meat Packers in Plainwell. They manage all their finances on their own and were recently able to pay back a travel loan of several thousand dollars that they owed to Samaritas, the organization that help bring them to Kalamazoo.

When they first arrived our team of volunteers was heavily involved in helping them shop for groceries, clothes, and household goods. They are now able to manage all of their shopping on their own and recently replaced a coffee table that was damaged accidentally. (Anyone who has raised three active boys knows what a common occurrence damaged furniture can be!)

After receiving lessons from UUCC members, Jean has become proficient at driving and dealing with most of the needed automobile maintenance. He has no problem getting around the community. He can drive to work, to his children's schools, to health care appointments, and more. Recent costly car repairs required dipping into the fund we set up for this purpose. Jean is very grateful for our continued support.

The children are all attending school. Amelia is in Pre-K at Washington Academy. Teddy is in 1st grade at Parkwood-Upjohn. James is in 6th grade at Milwood Middle School. And Kwizera is in 9th grade at Loy Norrix. The boys are able to utilize school buses to get to and from school on their own. The older children provide care for the younger ones after school. Kwizera picks up his sister Amelia from the bus every day and makes dinner for the family while they wait for their parents to return home from work.

Opportunities for socialization that had ground to a halt during the early days of the pandemic have improved. This summer Regena Nelson and Pat Timm made sure that the children were provided with opportunities for swimming, spending time in nature, and just plain fun. (See [page 16](#) for photos.) And, being back at school full-time and in-person this fall will no doubt help improve their English proficiency.

Family friend, Theophile, who provided invaluable assistance as a translator and a babysitter recently returned to Africa. This has left a few gaps in the family's support system. Kwizera does his best to translate for his parents but his limited understanding of more difficult concepts like benefits, co-pays, deductibles, etc. sometimes makes it difficult. UUCC volunteers are still needed to read and explain documents from health care providers, schools and other government agencies.

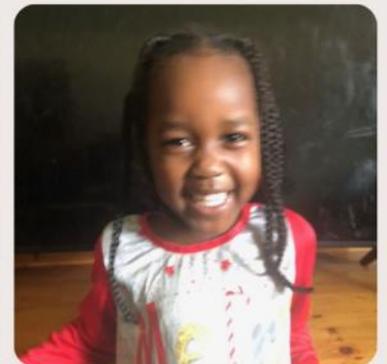
Other situations that require our ongoing support are dealing with occasional emergencies and illnesses that are part and parcel of raising four children. The American system does not make it easy for low-income workers to raise a family. Childcare is an expensive luxury. Public transportation is inadequate. Low-wage, non-union workplaces have little tolerance for family-related absences. The hurdles are many. *It takes a village to raise a child* is a proverb that exists in many different African languages. UUCC is (and should be) part of that village for Jean and Francois. If you are interested in joining the Congolese Family Team and helping our friends continue to thrive, please contact [Denise](#).

# FAITH IN ACTION

*This summer Regena Nelson and Pat Timm made sure that the children were provided with opportunities for swimming, spending time in nature, and just plain FUN.*

Pat Timm shares some photos highlighting some of the summer enrichment activities that UCC volunteers were able to arrange for Kwizera, James, Teddy, and Amelia.

The photos were taken at Milham Park, Craig's Cruisers, Lewis Farms, and the Timm's Family Cottage. Pat reports that a good time was had by all!



**Kwizera  
James  
Teddy  
Amelia  
Summer 2021**

# OPPORTUNITIES



## Introduction to Judaism

Rabbi Schicker from Temple B'nai Israel in Kalamazoo is offering a two-session class via Zoom in November to help people become familiar with Judaism.

The class will meet on Sunday afternoons on **November 7** and **November 14** from **4:00 PM - 5:30 PM**.

Members of the ISAAC family are welcome to attend, including those who previously joined the class in 2019.

Come learn a little about:

What is Judaism? Who is a Jew?

What are the Jewish holy books?

How do they relate to each other?

Ritual Objects, Holidays, and Rites of Passage.

Please register in advance for this meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZlpcuyurzgiGdEJnDOGU5Xcn11Mo3TWL1yJ>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Rabbi Schicker will make sure to leave time for your questions during both sessions.

Are you a little shy about speaking up? Share your questions anonymously, now or during the class, on this virtual board:

<https://padlet.com/rabbi12/ISAACJudaism101>



## 19th Annual Holiday Open House

Hosted by Picket Fence Pottery

In the Barn Studio at

36889 County Road 374, Paw Paw, MI

*For all your locally made holiday shopping needs:*

Handmade pottery, jewelry, knit goods, textiles (including handspun yarn by Nancy Calme) and woodcrafts.

**November 13, 14, 20, and 21**

**Saturdays: 9 AM-5 PM & Sundays: Noon-5 PM**

Masks Required.



## The ISAAC Store is Coming....



Our partners at Interfaith Strategies for Advocacy and Action in the Community (ISAAC) are excited to announce that they soon will be selling long-sleeved T-shirts,

hoodies, and other clothes that say **ISAAC: Grasping Change at the Root. Growing the Beloved CommUNITY** on the [ISAAC website](https://www.isaac.org). Visit the site for more information about prices, colors, sizes, and styles and to place an order.

Wearing your ISAAC swag out in the community when you are helping to build the Beloved Community will help raise awareness about ISAAC and the many ways it makes a positive impact on people's lives.

# ISAAC VIRTUAL BANQUET



## ISAAC Virtual Banquet

### Grasping Change at the Root: Growing the Beloved CommUNITY

November 11, 2021 6pm

Dr. Michael Eric Dyson, Keynote Speaker



Please plan to join our interfaith partners at ISAAC (Interfaith Strategies for Advocacy and Action in the Community) at a Virtual Banquet on Thursday, November 11 at 6:00 PM. Click [HERE](#) for a video invitation from Rev. Gy and friends.

The meeting will feature keynote speaker, Rev. Dr. Michael Eric Dyson. Dr. Dyson is a Georgetown University sociology professor, an ordained clergy member, a New York Times contributing opinion writer, a contributing editor of The New Republic and of ESPN's The Undeclared website, and author of many books including *Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America*.

ISAAC will also present awards for Congregation of the Year, Woman of Equity, Lifetime Achievement, Public Ally of the Year, Clergy of the Year, Leader of the Year, Elected Ally of the Year, and Servant Leader of the Year.

Special entertainment will be provided by Brooke Edwards, a vocalist from Galilee Baptist Church.

UUC member Regena Nelson who serves on the ISAAC Executive Committee reminds us that, "The ISAAC banquet is the epitome of diversity and inclusion." Please plan to take this opportunity "to celebrate with each other and see the best in each other" and embody the beloved community we are hoping to create in the wider world.

There are several ways for you to join the banquet:

On ISAAC's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/isaackalamazoo>

On ISAAC's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/ISAAC4Kalamazoo>

And with friends in UUC's Zoom Room: Click [HERE](#) for the Zoom link.

ISAAC will be providing a "Banquet" of food options, in the weeks following November 11, from BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) owned local restaurants that are donating part of their proceeds to support ISAAC. ISAAC wants to intentionally support our local BIPOC restaurants and invites the entire ISAAC family to support this effort. Watch for the dates and details about each restaurant in future Weekly Emails or stop by the [ISAAC website](#).



# CALENDAR



## NOVEMBER 2021

DAY	DATE	EVENT	TIME
Tuesday	November 2	ELECTION DAY Qigong	7 AM – 8 PM 9:00 AM
Wednesday	November 3	Board of Trustees Meeting	6:30 PM
Thursday	November 4	Stewardship Committee Meeting Moral Decision Making Lecture and Discussion	1:00 PM 7:00 PM
Sunday	November 7	A Time for Everything with Rev. Gy After-Service Social Hour Program Council Meet-Up for Youth	10:00 AM 10:45 AM 11:00 AM 1:00 PM
Tuesday	November 9	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	November 10	Sunday Services Committee Meeting	5:00 PM
Thursday	November 11	ISAAC Virtual Banquet Watch Party	6:00 PM
Friday	November 12	Women's Book Group	1:00 PM
Sunday	November 14	Hills to Die On with Rev. Gy After-Service Social Hour Meet-Up for Youth	10:00 AM 10:45 AM 1:00 PM
Monday	November 15	Sustainability Group	7:00 PM
Tuesday	November 16	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	November 17	Caring Community Team Meeting	1:00 PM
Thursday	November 18	A Conversation with Martha Creek	7:00 PM
Saturday	November 20	TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE Men's Group Breakfast	All Day 8:30 AM
Sunday	November 21	Guest at Your Table Sunday with The Youth Group After-Service Social Hour	10:00 AM 10:45 AM
Tuesday	November 23	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	November 24	NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	12:00 PM
Thursday	November 25	THANKSGIVING	All Day
Sunday	November 28	With David Roth After-Service Social Hour NO Meet-Up for Youth	10:00 AM 10:45 AM
Tuesday	November 30	Qigong Civil Conversations Group	9:00 AM 7:00 PM



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**2021-2022 Board of Trustees**

Eric Nelson

Darby Fetzer

Judy Pigg-Behrendt

Freya Lake

Andy Miller

**The next Newsletter Deadline is  
Wednesday, November 24 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**