



# CommUUunity Matters

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest Michigan

April 2023

## APRIL SUNDAY SERVICES

Sundays at 10:00 AM [on Facebook](#) and [Zoom](#)  
Meeting ID: 926 5154 8494 Passcode: 286763

### **April 2: *Perfect is the Enemy* with Rev. Gy**

Voltaire famously wrote, "perfect is the enemy of good." Join Rev. Gy as they help us consider how the very idea of 'the best' prevents us from living wholeheartedly.

### **April 9: *Heal and Renew* with Rev. Gy**

Last year we decided to re-imagine Easter as a time to celebrate the healing and renewal of the Earth. This year we will take that idea a little further with an Earth Communion and some hands-on activities to help us practice Earth stewardship.

### **April 16: *Peace During War* with Michael Wilder**

Michael Wilder, Group Violence Intervention Coordinator for the City of Kalamazoo, will present and discuss his mini-documentary *Peace During War* about two former gang members, who made peace after almost 20 years of conflict. Through forgiveness, reconciliation, and education, these former gangsters are changing the minds and hearts of urban youth.

### **April 23: *Risk vs Safety* with Rev. Gy**

Often, the reasons we want to maintain the status quo are comfort and control. Trying new ways of being and doing and decentering our privilege to make room for different ideas and perspectives involves taking risks and letting go of our illusion of control.

### **April 30: *Let Me Be Me* with Shane Barrera**

Shane Barrera, also known as Miss Moscato, will talk to us about how they came to embrace their inner queen and why they feel that drag shows are so important to society.



## **Spiritual Theme for March INNOVATIONS AND RISK-TAKING**

Our monthly spiritual themes in this year of [Widening the Circle](#) have been taken from a report by the Unitarian Universalist Association Commission for Institutional Change which was tasked with addressing the perennial problem of racism within Unitarian Universalism. Click [HERE](#) to read or listen to the chapter on [Innovations and Risk-Taking](#).

We live in a world of change. The pace of change is now at an unprecedented level accelerated by shifts in global economics and demographics. This is affecting us at the local level as well, specifically in these ways:

- The demographics of our nation are changing, with BIPOC making up a greater share of the population.
- Younger families face extreme stress because of increased workloads and greater economic insecurity.
- Technology has changed expectations for the kind and quality of worship, making authenticity and accessibility particularly important to newer generations.
- Newer generations expect to see a diversity of voices represented at church as well as a multicultural competency that is the norm in schools and workplaces.

Question to ponder this month: *How can UUCC creatively respond to these changes in a way that will help us build a Beloved Community that benefits us all?*

# GUESTS IN THE PULPIT

***We are excited to welcome these guests to UU Community Church in April:***

**Michael Wilder** was born and raised in Chicago and currently serves as the Group Violence Intervention Coordinator for the City of Kalamazoo. Michael did not always seem destined for such a prestigious title. Try Career Criminal instead. After three trips to prison, his future was as bleak as the desert. However, God had a different plan for him. After his last release from prison he enrolled in college and graduated from Kalamazoo Valley Community College with a degree in Political Science and the rest is history! Michael is a man of God, a devoted husband to his beautiful wife Dominique, and a father to his children. He is also an educator at Covenant Academy in Kalamazoo. He co-founded **Peace During War** with Yafinceio Harris. It is an organization that helps youth find their purpose and turn their experiences in the streets into something positive. Yafinceio and Michael were once rival enemies in the streets, but they now run an organization together, doing awesome and healing work in our community.



Originally from South Haven, **Shane Barrera** lived and worked in Kalamazoo as an HIV/STI prevention advocate before relocating to Grand Rapids (with a few years in Phoenix in between). Shane, performing as Miss Moscato, was crowned Miss Amateur Kalamazoo 2019, Miss Amateur Red Ribbon 2019, and Kalamazoo Queen of Hearts 2020. They now performs regularly at drag shows all across the country. Shane believes that drag “brings self-confidence, especially to people in the LGBTQ community” and is a unique way to advocate for issues. They use the platform to help fight the stigma of HIV/AIDS and to support women’s rights and Black lives.

For our Thoughtful Thursday conversation on **April 27 at 7:00 PM** via Zoom, we will be joined by a representative of [Michigan Liberation](#), an organization dedicated to achieving peace, wellness, and justice for the Black and Brown communities in Michigan.

Michigan Liberation is the driving force behind the **Michigan Black Mama’s Day Bailout** initiative. This is an annual program held during May and June to coincide with Mother’s Day. It not only provides help with cash bail (a discriminatory practice that essentially criminalizes poverty) but it raises awareness about the need for criminal justice reform, and gives space for action to those directly impacted. We hope you will join us to learn more about the work Michigan Liberation is doing and how we can partner with them to effect change.

Click [HERE](#) to join the Zoom meeting. Meeting ID: 476 401 695 Passcode: 449120 All are welcome.



# FROM THE MINISTER

## From the Minister

[Rev. Gy Ludvig-McCartney](#)

*Stories move in circles. They don't go in straight lines.*

*So, it helps if you listen in circles.*

*There are stories inside stories and stories between stories,  
and finding your way through them is as easy AND  
as hard as finding your way home.*

*And part of the finding is the getting lost.*

*And when you're lost, you start to look around and to listen.*

~Sue Bender



Just recently in conversation with a friend I revisited the reason I became a minister. I was 16. I knew nothing about life, little about grief, and almost null about struggle—the struggle to pay bills, figure out complicated relationships, navigate rare, scary diagnoses, and the like.

What I envisioned was studying, scintillating conversations, dinner with congregants, pews chuck full of people, glory and hallelujah.

As love would have it I learned much about struggle, figuring out how I'd meet ends in my personal life as well as that of the church. As if one of those wasn't enough. I sat with the ill, the old, the frail, the dying, the mourning – the beloved.

And I did have dinner and scintillating conversations with congregants, there has been plenty of glory and hallelujah. It's just that life never rested there. It just moved on to the next and the unknown. Just when I thought I could rest a little on yesterday's laurels, life showed me otherwise.

I think I became a minister to fully engage LIFE. I didn't know it then. I kind of know it now. I became a minister because every now and then I can see what others can't. Life is like that—twists and turns and so much hope.

I have hope now. Hope that we explore new potentials for our beloved community even as I embark on yet another healing trip to LA. Hope for me, hope for us.

Maybe you can feel it, too. I would like you to. There's so much goodness here that can touch and heal the untouchables, the broken, and the lost. There's so much goodness here that with every touch, it grows bigger, stronger, wiser. Love built this place, love shall breathe future into it. Your love. Our love.

25 years ago we might not have been clear why this place was needed. Today we're wiser, more seasoned, and we now know that we're here to be a beacon of light and love. We're here, because every now and then we can see what others can't.

Here's to life, honesty, fight for what's right and just. And glory and hallelujah.

# CARING COMMUNITY



## APRIL CARING COMMUNITY NEWS

### Why is everyone exhausted on April 1?

*Because they just had a 31-day March.*

Some historians speculate that April Fools' Day dates back to 1582, when France switched from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar. In the Julian Calendar, as in the Hindu calendar, the new year began with the spring equinox around April 1.

People who were slow to get the news or failed to recognize that the start of the new year had moved to January 1 and continued to celebrate it during the last week of March through April 1 became the butt of jokes and hoaxes and were called "April fools." These pranks included having paper fish placed on their backs and being referred to as "poisson d'avril" (April fish), said to symbolize a young, easily caught fish and a gullible person. Source: [www.history.com](http://www.history.com)

### **Joys, Concerns, and Member News (No Fooling!)**

UCC friends have been on the move lately. **The Nelsons** enjoyed two spring breaks - one down to Florida and the other up to Northern Michigan. The **Tasko Family** spent their spring break in Pennsylvania. **Bev Folz** visited family in Boston and **Mary King** visited family in San Francisco. **Marsha Laya** returned to Michigan from her winter accommodations in Florida.

A few of us - **Miriam**, her son **Isaac**, and **Erin Michael** - were stuck at home in quarantine after testing positive for Covid.

**Jeannine Willacker** was recently hospitalized but is now recovering at home. Please keep her in your thoughts and send healing energy her way.

**Rev. Gy** is preparing to travel to Los Angeles in April for another procedure to repair re-occurring CSF leak. Rev. Gy is grateful for all the love and support this community gives them as they struggle with this ongoing health issue.

**Matthew Nelson** has been offered and accepted a summer internship at University of California at Davis to help further his study of physics.

**Bev Folz's granddaughter Maisie** will study abroad next year in Bath, England and is excited to have been accepted to a prestigious one-on-one writing tutor program at Oxford.

We received some exciting news from our former Music Director, **Nick Sienkiewicz**. He will be making his Carnegie Hall debut on June 18 as the conductor of the Lehigh Valley Chorale and part of a concert by the New England Symphonic Ensemble. Those of us who won't be able to make it to NYC will be delighted to learn that we can see Nick closer to home at Fountain Street Church in Grand Rapids on Saturday, April 15 at 7:30 PM. Nick will perform the part of Matthew in Craig Hella Johnson's oratorio, *Considering Matthew Shepard*. This concert is free and open to the public.

Being part of UCC has been an important and wonderful part of **Joan Young's** life for many years. She has appreciated the friendship, the kindness, and the emotional input it has given to her. She believes UCC is a very special group and she is thankful for all that it has offered her. However, she is now at a time in her life where advanced age prevents her (continued on page 5)



# CARING COMMUNITY

from being part of this community. She will continue to think of us often and is glad that two of her quilts hang on our walls so that part of her will always be with us.

Beverly has set a date for the **memorial service** for her husband, **John Folz**. It will be held at UCC on Saturday, **May 13, from 2-4 PM**. We will all want to set that date aside on our calendars so we can join together to remember John and support our good friend, Beverly.

## **Remember All Our April Babies:**

Let's wish a "Happy Birthday!" to our members and friends born in April: **Barbara Bott, Stace Danielson, Ryan Brozovich, Nancy Crowell, Patti Ludvig-McCartney, Kelin Michael, and Freya Lake**. If your birthday is not on our list, please let us know and we will add you to the list!

## **Welcome New Visitors:**

It was lovely to meet **Alex Kolstoe, Sherrie VandePutte, Emily Harom, Adam Frank, LeAnne Seaver, Dave Utermohlen, Teri Sanderman, Dawn Millar, AJ and Dave Swan, and Tina Minor** at UCC recently. We hope you come back and visit us again soon!

*Everyone in the church is part of our Caring Community, and caring for one another is a key feature of the congregation. If you have a need that we can help with or some news that you would like to share with us all, pass it on to the coordinators through the UCC office: 269-324-7262 or [uucommunity@gmail.com](mailto:uucommunity@gmail.com).*



**Generosity Sunday** Our Generosity Sunday recipient for the month of April will be the **Kalamazoo Alliance to Prevent Gun Violence (KAP)**. KAP is an initiative of H.O.P.E Thru Navigation, an organization that provides wraparound navigation services and support to individuals with substance use disorder, criminal history, and/or facing housing insecurity. KAP's goal is to empower youth, women, and men who have been impacted by gun violence to break the cycle of trauma and violence. KAP produces a resource guide to provide support to those struggling with the impact of gun violence. They work with community partners such as ISAAC, Urban Alliance, Douglass Community Association, Vine Neighborhood Association, and others to present events that raise awareness about the impact of gun violence and provide opportunities for youth to have safe, healthy, educational, and productive options while not in school. As gun violence has recently surpassed car crashes as the leading killer of American children, supporting KAP seems more important than ever. If it is yours to do, there are several ways to give. You can place a check made out to UCC with Generosity Sunday the memo in the offering basket anytime in April. You can mail your check to our building. If you prefer cash, we will be donating all cash and loose change in the offering basket on April 16 to KAP. Or, you can use a debit or credit card when you give online using the church website or the Vanco app on your phone.

# 2023 PLEDGE DRIVE

Thank you to all who came to our Celebration of Generosity on March 25 with special musical guest, Bob Ricci. Bob treated us to a wonderful performance of George Gershwin tunes and shared fascinating stories about Gershwin's life. The stewardship committee is pleased to announce the 2023-2024 pledge total of \$99,185. They are continually amazed by YOUR ongoing generosity and support for the mission of this church. If you have not pledged yet and would like to do so, you can submit your pledge information to Ron Crowell ([ronald.crowell@wmich.edu](mailto:ronald.crowell@wmich.edu) or 269-599-1242) Please know that everyone's contributions to our church, in all forms, are valued! Thanks to each of you for all you do and give to our beloved Unitarian Universalist Community.



## STEWARDSHIP CELEBRATION OF GENEROSITY MARCH 2023





# LEADERSHIP



The Board of Trustees met on March 1. Here are a few of the things they accomplished:

- Firmed up the schedule for the budget process and annual meeting.
- Discussed the anticipated budget deficit for both this and next program year and considered several ways to reduce spending.
- Approved delegates for General Assembly.
- Received a report from the nominating committee about recruits to run for election to positions on the board in June.
- Click [HERE](#) to read the minutes from the March Meeting. The next regular Board meeting will take place via Zoom **Wednesday, April 5 at 6:30 PM**. Click [HERE](#) to see the agenda. 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](#).



## Budget Roundtable

Part of our regular budget process is to provide the congregation with a preview of the proposed budget prior to the annual meeting so they can offer feedback and suggestions before it is time to take a vote.

This year's **Budget Roundtable** will take place on Sunday, **April 30** following the service. This will be a hybrid gathering so you can participate via Zoom or in person.

Members of the Board and the Finance Team will be on hand to present and explain the 2023/2024 budget and answer any questions you might have. A copy of the budget will be emailed to you before the meeting so you can look it over carefully before the Roundtable.

## Article II Update

The process to update Article II of the Unitarian Universalist Association by-laws and the way we articulate our UU values is moving forward. Following the presentation of the Article II Study Proposal in January, the Board of Trustees began developing a congregational engagement and amendment process. The 4-part process will begin in April. During the first phase, **anyone** interested in proposing an amendment to be considered can submit their suggested amendment idea through the Article II Amendment form, which will be live on [the Article II Study main webpage](#) starting April 1. More info about the amendment process will be shared at the April Program Council meeting for those who would like to take part in the process.



ISAAC

## Sponsorship Opportunity

Our justice partners at ISAAC ([Interfaith Strategies for Advocacy and Action in the Community](#)) would like our help to sponsor **Dine 4 Justice**, an event that hopes to raise awareness about opportunities for juvenile criminal justice reform and raise funds for the Youth Juvenile Justice Fellow program. If you would like to make a donation to help ISAAC sponsor this event you can mail us a check made out to UUCS with ISAAC in the memo line. Or, you can drop your checks into the collection basket on Sunday. You can also give using the donate button on our website or the Vanco app on your smartphone or tablet. Please use the ISAAC Special Collection tile when giving electronically. Thank you for your support!

# PROGRAM COUNCIL



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

Everyone - members, friends, visitors—is invited to help create programming at UU Community Church on second Sundays at around 11:20 AM. Bring your voice to our next meeting on **April 2**. We will meet following the service and you can participate either in person or on Zoom.

At our March meeting, we enjoyed delicious homemade soup made by **Miriam** and **Rev. Gy** and bread made by **Steve Tasko**. And of course, we had much to **CELEBRATE!**

February was another great month at UUC! We enjoyed great Sunday services with engaging messages from Rev. Gy, **Bob Weir**, **Dorothy Brooks**, and the **Exploring Anti-Racism Group**. A wonderful small ensemble sang on February 26! Sixteen people attended the Thoughtful Tuesday Conversation with **Tracy Hall** from OutFront Kalamazoo. Lots of great discussions took place during our various small group meetings. We provided opportunities for folks to grow spiritually with our **Qigong**, **Yoga Nidra**, and **Mindfulness** practices. We hosted the **NAACP's Baby Shower Drive**. The Stewardship Committee put on a magnificent **Mardi Gras Celebration** and we all survived the **Great Ice Storm of 2023!**

Are you looking for **OPPORTUNITIES** to get involved at UU Community Church?

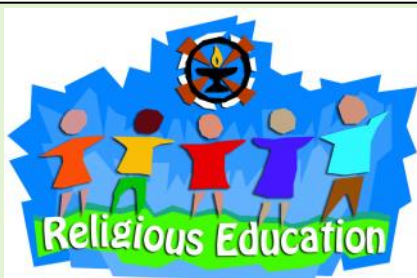
At the March meeting, we agreed to spend up to \$200 of our budget to reserve a table at Kalamazoo Pride. If you would like to be part of the Pride Planning Team, please contact Miriam ([uucommunity@gmail.com](mailto:uucommunity@gmail.com)). Other volunteer opportunities we heard about include:

- **Sunday Greeters**—Contact Ken VanEseltine
- **Coffee Hosts**—Sign up in the Community Room
- **Facebook Hosts**—Contact Miriam
- **Sound/Zoom Techs**—Contact Steve Tasko
- **Congolese Family Support Team**—Contact Denise Sonier

On the **AGENDA** for April's Program Council Meeting:

- ISAAC Update and Dues
- Article II Amendment Process
- Open House Theatre Update

Please plan to join us at the next Program Council meeting on Sunday, April 2 at around 11:30 AM, in person or via Zoom, and help keep UUC's programs going strong. We will be serving lunch again to raise money for our Youth Program. If you have any questions, or items to add to the agenda, contact the office ([uucommunity@gmail.com](mailto:uucommunity@gmail.com)).



DATE	APRIL UU EXPLORATION PLANS	VOLUNTEERS
April 2	Community Building—Game Day	Isaac Epskamp-Hunt
April 9	Multigenerational Sunday Service	N/A
April 16	LGBTQ+ History and Visibility—Day of Silence	Kimberly Ridley
April 23	UU Identity—Earth Day	Pat Timm
April 30	UU Identity - May Day	Pat Timm



# RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION



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

Work continues on ***Drag Me to Church***, an all-ages drag event at UU Community Church on Saturday, **May 20**. From the very beginning, ensuring that everyone—the audience, the performers, and church volunteers—stays safe at this event has been a major consideration for me, Rev. Gy, the Board of Trustees, and even Nick. We all have seen news reports. We understand there is a “backlash” going on right now against drag shows that is fueled by social media, special interest groups, and right-wing legislators. We know by hosting a drag show that we could be inviting negative attention to our community.

So, we reached out to OutFront Kalamazoo and ask for a meeting with Program Manager, Dell Darnell to discuss our show and get some guidance about safety and security. The folks at OutFront were the perfect people to ask for help. They have lots of experience putting on fabulous events and also, sadly, lots of experience dealing with homophobia and hate.

Nick and I and our collaborator from Open House Theatre, Mary Roscoe, had an opportunity last month to sit down with Dell (over Zoom) and talk. The first thing we learned is that dozens of drag shows going on without incident every month in the greater Kalamazoo area. They are held in Galesburg, out in Richland, over in Oshtemo, and elsewhere. Our friends at Peoples Church even hosted a drag show on a Sunday morning during their worship service and no one batted an eye! Dell believes that for the most part, Kalamazoo County is tolerant of drag shows and it is unlikely that our event will draw a protest.

Unlikely does not mean it isn't possible though and Dell agreed we should consider the range of possible disruptive scenarios and make plans for how we will deal with them. Once we have drawn up some plans, Dell will look over what we came up with and provide feedback and suggestions. They also offered the help of a group of people in OutFront's network who have been trained in self-defense and de-escalation techniques. This group would be willing to provide security for us during the event.

OutFront's support of our little drag show has made us feel a lot more confident. I will be working with the board over the next few weeks to draw up a comprehensive security plan that will help us know what to do if we face any disruptions because of the drag show.

All this talk of safety, security, and self-defense may be leading some of you to question whether a drag show is too risky of a proposition for UCC. Should we be drawing attention to ourselves like this? I think it is important to remember why we decided to do this in the first place to find our answer.

We are holding a drag show to visible, public support the LGBTQ+ community. Despite the advancements society has made over the past few decades, LGBTQ+ folks still face prejudice, bullying, threats, and even violence just for being who they are. For the LGBTQ+ community, drag shows are about pride, acceptance, and breaking down stigmas. And, they might even save people's lives.

According to the Trevor Project, LGBTQ+ youth are more than four times more likely to attempt suicide than their peers. LGBTQ+ youth are not inherently prone to suicide risk because of their sexual orientation or gender identity but rather are placed at higher risk because of how they are mistreated and stigmatized in society.

When we fly our rainbow flag, when we speak up for LGBTQ+ equality, we are throwing a lifeline to people who may be isolated and struggling. It could be that for someone out there, a welcoming drag show in a church may be just the sort of vibrant, joyful, glamorous, countercultural demonstration they need to know that it is OK for them to be different. It is OK for them to be who they are. For me, knowing that we are making things better for people who are hurting makes it worth any risk we might face. I hope you feel that way too.

# LEARNING AND GROWTH



## Thoughtful Thursdays

On select Thursday evenings this year, 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 virtual programs offer.

Click [HERE](#) to join any of our Thoughtful Thursday programs. Meeting ID: 476 401 695 Passcode: 449120

### APRIL 6: UUCC FILM FORUM: THE ANTS AND THE GRASSHOPPER

On Thursday, April 6 starting at 5:30 PM we will screen and discuss the 2021 documentary *The Ants and the Grasshopper*. This will be a hybrid event. You can attend in person or via Zoom. (See more below)

### APRIL 13: CIVIL CONVERSATIONS GROUP

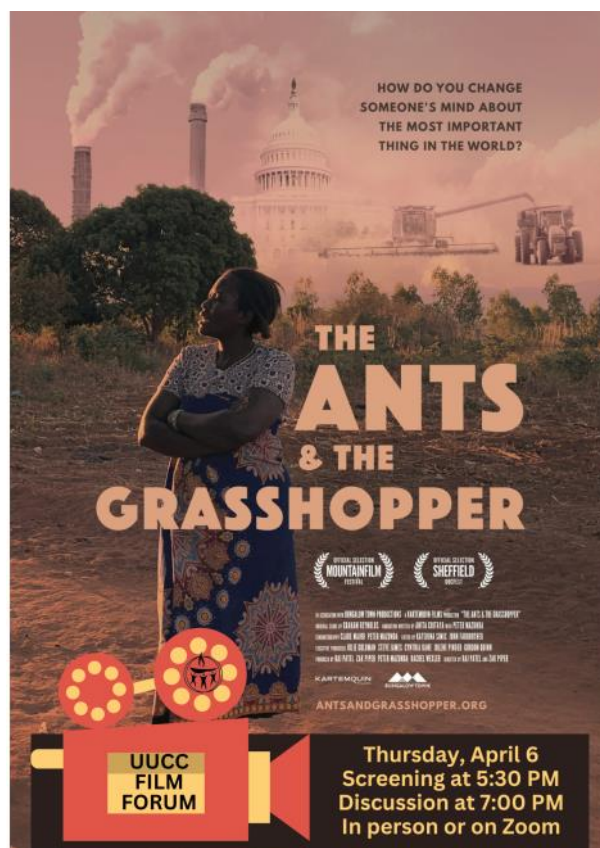
On Thursday, April 13 at 7 PM via Zoom, our Civil Conversations Group meets to help participants learn the skills needed to have respectful and mutually beneficial discussions about the issues that divide us and our society. (Details on [page 12.](#))

### APRIL 20: EXPLORING ANTI-RACISM

Our next session of Exploring Anti-Racism is on Thursday, April 20 at 7 PM via Zoom. We will continue our discussion of ***Anti-Racist Organizational Development*** and work through the questions on pages 65-77 of [DISMANTLING RACISM: A RESOURCE BOOK](#). A few paper copies of the reading will be available at the Welcome Desk for those who may have difficulties accessing the article online.

### APRIL 27: A CONVERSATION WITH MICHIGAN LIBERATION

On Thursday, April 27 at 7:00 PM via Zoom we will be joined by a representative of the organization behind the ***Black Mama's Day Bail Out*** and the campaign to end cash bail in Michigan. (More on [page 2.](#))



## The Ants and the Grasshopper

We are excited to be partnering with the organization Peace is Loud to inspire climate action with a screening and discussion of the documentary *The Ants and the Grasshopper*.

This 2021 film follows farmer/activist Anita Chitaya as she travels from her home village in Malawi all around the US, using her faith to connect with American farmers and spread awareness about the climate crisis. On her journey, she meets climate skeptics and despairing farmers. Her journey takes her across all the divisions shaping the US, from the rural-urban divide, to schisms of race, class, and gender, to the thinking that allows Americans to believe we live on a different planet from everyone else. It will take all her skill and experience to persuade us that we're all in this together.

You can watch the film online by clicking [HERE](#). We will also screen it at UCC and on Zoom on April 6 at 5:30 PM. A discussion of the film will take place in person and online starting at 7:00 PM.

# SPIRITUAL GROWTH

## Qigong at UUC

**Every Tuesday and Saturday at 9:00 AM** via Zoom, you can enjoy a Qigong session with supportive UUC members and friends.



Qigong is a series of mindful movements and breathing exercises that can help center the mind and relax the body. It is a great way to start your day! Members of our group report feeling uplifted, energized, and relaxed by the practice. You should give it a try!

Click [HERE](#) for the TUESDAY Qigong Zoom  
Meeting ID: 697 338 090 Passcode: 138550.

Click [HERE](#) for the SATURDAY Qigong Zoom  
Meeting ID: 977 5286 6838 Passcode: 383810

If you have any questions about Qigong, please contact Freya Lake ([freyalake@@sbcglobal.net](mailto:freyalake@@sbcglobal.net))

## Yoga Nidra with Erica

We will only be holding one Yoga Nidra session in April because of Easter. Daring to Rest™ facilitator, **Erica Guthaus** will join us on Zoom on Sunday, **April 23 at 7:00 PM.**

Yoga Nidra is a type of meditation practice that can bring one into a peaceful, restful state of being. Anyone can practice Yoga Nidra. It requires no special equipment or physical ability. Yoga Nidra has been shown to be beneficial for those who suffer from insomnia, burnout, and anxiety.

Please feel free to invite anyone who would benefit from deep rest and relaxation to join these sessions. All are welcome!



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

Meeting ID: 918 3683 5566 Passcode: 917230



## Mindfulness Practice with Eric

On the **4th Wednesday of each month**, you can join **Eric Nelson**, UUC member and lead facilitator at [Stress Less Kalamazoo](#), for drop-in Mindfulness Practice at **7:00 PM.** The next session is on Wednesday, March 22. The practice lasts about 45 minutes and includes readings at the beginning and end. Both newcomers and seasoned Mindfulness veterans will benefit from these practices.

Click [HERE](#) to join the Zoom Meeting. ID: 833 5090 0441. All are welcome!

The poet Wendell Berry writes, *"The soil is the great connector of lives, the source and destination of all."* The soil beneath our feet seems inert but it is teeming with life. There are more living organisms in one tablespoon of soil than people living on Earth! Soil is the cornerstone of all life on the planet. It provides nutrients for plants and in turn for us and other animals. Soil is something we should celebrate! On **Sunday, April 9 at 10:00 AM** we will hold an **Earth Communion** to celebrate and honor soil. Everyone is invited to bring a little soil from a garden, a flowerbed, a favorite nature preserve, or even a houseplant to add to our Earth Communion bowl. We will mix up the different soils, add our blessings, and use it to plant some acorns that we hope will grow into mighty trees.



## Earth Communion



# SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

## Finding Joy Through a Smaller Environmental Foot Print



The UUCC Sustainability Group meets on the third Monday of each month to reflect on their personal sustainability journeys, to share their successes and failures, and to explore ideas for promoting sustainable living at UUCC and in the wider community. April is a busy time for the group and they are working on several projects:

**Green Sanctuary 2030:** The Green Sanctuary Program is a Unitarian Universalist Association accreditation process for congregations interested in engaging in climate justice work. The program is designed to guide congregations through a process of education, opportunity assessment, and discernment that produces an action plan composed of activities and projects for campaigns that address three goals: Mitigation, Adaptation and Resilience, and Justice. The Sustainability Group is currently working on the opportunity assessment that will help us create an action plan that is tailored to the needs and capabilities of our congregation.

**30-Day Sustainability Challenge:** The group plans to run the 30-Day Sustainability Challenge again this year. Emails will go out to UUCC members and friends each Saturday morning between April 22 and May 20 that are full of things to read, listen to, watch, and do that will inspire you to live more gently on the Earth. (See page 12 for more info)

**Rain Garden:** Now that the snow has melted, we have noticed some erosion in the Rain Garden we planted last fall. This was not totally unexpected. Hopefully, as the native plants become more established and do a better job of capturing run-off, erosion will become less of a problem. When the weather warms up, the group will plan a workday to address the issues.

**Vegetarian Feast 2023:** To highlight the many delicious ways we can fight climate change by incorporating vegetarian and vegan meals into our diet, the group will again hold a Vegetarian Feast this spring. The tentative date is **Saturday, June 10** and we hope to be joined by some friends from Peoples Church for the festivities.

If you are interested in learning more about sustainability, taking action for climate justice, or jump-starting your own individual sustainability goals, come to the Sustainability Group's next meeting on Monday, **April 17** at 7:00 PM via Zoom. Newcomers are always welcome! Click [HERE](#) to join the Zoom meeting. Meeting ID: 960 9812 1445 Passcode: 990641



## Building Beloved Community One Conversation at a Time

The **UUCC Civil Conversations Group** meets once a month to practice emotional intelligence skills and learn how to engage in meaningful conversations to help us build bridges toward greater understanding in the world. The group's next meeting will be on **Thursday, April 13** at **7:00 PM** via Zoom.

At each meeting, the group reviews what it takes to have a Civil Conversation, recaps civil (and not-so-civil) conversations they have engaged in recently, and brainstorms strategies that could be helpful when engaging with people who have different points of view. To hone their skills, the group also has a "practice" civil conversation about a potentially contentious topic. This month they will tackle **Book Banning and Censorship**.

Anyone interested is welcome to join this small group. You don't need to have attended the previous meetings. Click [HERE](#) to be part of the conversation via Zoom. Meeting ID: 476 401 695 Passcode: 449120

# SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE



The UUCC Sustainability Group challenges YOU to explore some ways that you can live more gently on planet Earth with their **30-Day Sustainability Challenge!**

Sign up for our emails and each Saturday between April 22 and May 20, you will receive an email with things to read, watch, and do that will inspire you to practice more healthy and sustainable habits. To sign up you can use your smartphone to access the QRC code above or look for the link in our Weekly Email or on our website.

Whether you are new to the idea of sustainability or a green living veteran, the UUCC Sustainability Challenge will provide you with food for thought and ideas for action! The Sustainability Challenge is not just for UUCC members and friends. Feel free to share info about the challenge with everyone you know.

We hope you take this opportunity to take personal action and join the global movement to fight climate change. Together, we can make a positive impact on our precious planet! If you have any questions about the Sustainability Challenge, contact Miriam ([uucommunity@gmail.com](mailto:uucommunity@gmail.com)).

## EPS Foam Recycling—April 22

The City of Kalamazoo will provide an opportunity to recycle clean, dry EPS Foam (aka Styrofoam) labeled with a "6" on Saturday, April 22 from 10 AM to 1 PM at Mayor's Riverfront Park. Thanks to a partnership with Schupan, you can also bring old unwanted electronic items for recycling too! Most items are recycled for free, but CRT and LCD monitors and TVs will have a \$10 processing fee.



If you are not a city resident or if you cannot make it the recycling pick up day, please plan to bring your Styrofoam to UUCC and our recycling volunteers Ron and Nancy Crowell will make sure it gets recycled! Look for the collection bin at the back of the sanctuary near the Welcome Table.



## Earth Day Festival

The Kalamazoo Earth Day Festival is returning in-person this year for the first time since the pandemic! Celebrate and take meaningful action with friends and neighbors for a better today and tomorrow.

The theme for the 2023 Festival is "Connecting Communities," and it will include staggered events in the Vine, Edison, and Oakwood neighborhoods to spread the excitement around the city

Join the celebration for live music, children's activities, interactive exhibits, food vendors, and to participate in meaningful projects to improve our community. Find more information visit [www.kalamazooearthday.com](http://www.kalamazooearthday.com).

# CONNECTION

## Women's Book Group

Friday, April 14  
1:00 PM via Zoom

### April Selection:

### *The Devil and Sherlock Holmes*

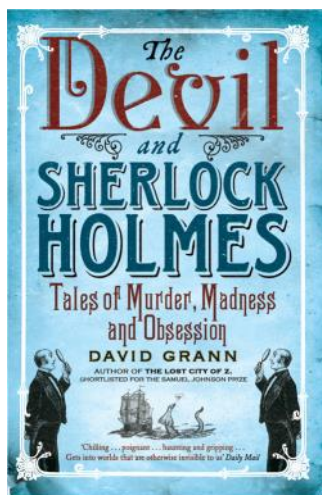
By David Grann

*Whether David Grann is investigating a mysterious murder, tracking a chameleon-like con artist, or hunting an elusive giant squid, he has proven to be a superb storyteller. In *The Devil and Sherlock Holmes*, Grann takes the reader around the world, revealing a gallery of rogues and heroes with their own particular fixations who show that truth is indeed stranger than fiction.*

*Each of the dozen stories in this collection reveals a hidden and often dangerous world and pivots around the gravitational pull of obsession and the captivating personalities of those caught in its grip. There is the world's foremost expert on Sherlock Holmes who is found dead in mysterious circumstances; an arson sleuth trying to prove that a man about to be executed is innocent; and sandhogs racing to complete the brutally dangerous job of building New York City's water tunnels before the old system collapses. Throughout, Grann's hypnotic accounts display the power—and often the willful perversity—of the human spirit.*

The Book Group will meet at 1:00 PM on April 14 via Zoom for a short business meeting followed by a discussion of the book led by Rita Stevens.

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



## 3rd Saturday Breakfast Group

On Saturday, **April 15** our Breakfast Group will meet at Garcia's Mexican Kitchen (right next door to church) at **9:00 AM**.

Please RSVP to **Ken Van Eseltine**, if you plan to come—

(269) 342-4793 or

[vaneseltinekl@sbcglobal.net](mailto:vaneseltinekl@sbcglobal.net)



## New UCC Teams Are Forming

The final step in our Appreciative Inquiry process is project development! We are ready to start working on some of the projects we identified as worthwhile and that have a group of at least three volunteers willing to commit. Based on the information that we collected at our March 26 meeting we have four projects that meet our criteria:

- **Community Composting at UCC**
- **Resilience Training for Activists Workshop**
- **Civil Conversation Community Debates**
- **Congregational Skills/Interest Database**

Teams ready to work on these projects are forming now. If YOU are interested in getting involved, please contact Nancy Calme

([nancy.calme@gmail.com](mailto:nancy.calme@gmail.com)) and

she will get you connected with one of the teams.



## New on the Art Wall

We are excited to have a new exhibit up on our Art Wall featuring paintings created by UCC youth group member **Nick Tasko**. Nick has been working with UCC artist, Mary Roscoe,

to learn a painting technique known as acrylic pouring or flow art. With this technique, the artist uses acrylic paints poured from a cup to create organic, free-flowing, and visually stunning abstract compositions. Nick has enjoyed experimenting with different techniques and color combinations as he worked on these paintings. He also loves how accessible the art form is to people of different skill levels and abilities.



# OPEN HOUSE THEATRE



## Tickets are on sale now for *Slipping*!

**Open House Theatre Company**, an organization that believes that the arts are for everyone, makes its home at UU Community Church. Open House Theatre strives to provide an accessible, educational, and inclusive theatrical experience for all individuals regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, or economic status.

Open House Theatre Company is currently in full swing with rehearsals for ***Slipping*** by local playwright, Daniel Smith. ***Slipping*** brings a timely and timeless story of struggle and friendship, as a group of young friends each confront their fears, hopes, and dreams. Living with the realities of student debt, unfair working conditions, and low wages, they find strength and support in each other and in the fight to form a union at the local paperboard plant against all odds. The play does not pull any punches in an honest portrayal of heartbreak, despair, joy, and love, as their lives cross and they each must find the courage to confront what life has thrown at them.

### Performance Dates:

Friday, May 5 at 6 PM  
Saturday, May 6, at 6 PM  
Sunday, May 7 at 2 PM

### Tickets:

All tickets are \$15. They can be purchased at the door, on the church website, or using the Vanco app on a smartphone or tablet.

Open House Theatre Company welcomes financial sponsors and volunteers to help this production succeed. They would love to hear from you today if you can help. Click [HERE](#) to access sponsorship info or contact Mary Roscoe at [openhousetheatrecompany@gmail.com](mailto:openhousetheatrecompany@gmail.com)  
Thank you for your support!

# 8TH PRINCIPLE



## Putting Our 8th UU Principle into Action

Our newly adopted 8th UU Principle calls on us to engage in individual and communal action to accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves, our congregation, and society at large.

The work to dismantle racism recently showed up in our efforts to combat climate change. The Sustainability Group has been working to complete a survey that will help us get certified as a Green Sanctuary by the Unitarian Universalist Association. One of the questions was: *Research and identify any historic moments when systemic oppression was locked in for people of color in your area. Examples include redlining, sundown towns or counties, abrogation of treaties with indigenous people, or pervasive repression of voting rights. This process will further your understanding of systemic racism in your region.*

This prompted one of the people in the group to ask, *What does this have to do with sustainability?* The answer is that racial and economic equity are fundamental to achieving sustainability goals that fight climate change and create a healthy world where all can thrive. The UUA website explains it this way:

The climate-change crisis with Global Warming is the existential threat to the human species and the web of life. It is the urgent, overarching survival and justice issue of our time, calling us to impactful action now.

In an era in which the call to dismantle racism could not be more clear, and when the COVID-19 pandemic stunningly highlights that systemic racism is inextricably bound to climate degradation and injustice, Unitarian Universalist Faithful Response calls us to bring our individual and collective gifts together to act with bold, inspiring, collaborative, networked, and effective leadership to ensure a livable world for all descendants and create climate justice with those who are systemically oppressed.

Climate action and climate justice call us to mitigate (reduce) climate change, along with better adaptation (coping) and increasing resilience (ability to adapt) to increasingly disastrous climate impacts. It calls us to balance urgency with open minds and hearts to learn and collaborate with communities most impacted. The result will be a difficult but creative and exciting transition to a clean renewable world with opportunity, survivability, and justice for all, now and for future generations.

You can learn more about the UU approach to environmental justice at [UU Ministry for Earth](https://www.uua.org/earth).



## Upcoming Anti-Racist Training

One Place at the Kalamazoo Public Library has a free opportunity coming up that might be beneficial to UUCC folks as we work to implement the 8th Principle. It is a four-part training called ***An Intermediate Anti-Racist Primer for Institutions***. It meets virtually on Thursdays from 11 AM -2 PM from April 13 to May 18. Topics covered will include unpacking internalized

racial oppression and superiority, cultivating a culture of belonging, and exploring healthy, liberatory accountability. Click [HERE](#) to find out more and to register.



# CALENDAR



## APRIL 2023

DAY	DATE	EVENT	TIME
Saturday	April 1	Qigong	9:00 AM
Sunday	April 2	Choir Practice Perfect is the Enemy with Rev Gy; UU Exploration for Kids Souper Sunday and After Service Social Time Program Council Meeting	9:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:00 AM 11:20 AM
Tuesday	April 4	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	April 5	Board of Trustees Meeting	6:30 PM
Thursday	April 6	Stewardship Meeting UUCC Film Forum Screening: The Ants and the Grasshopper UUCC Film Forum Discussion: The Ants and the Grasshopper	1:00 PM 5:30 PM 7:00 PM
Saturday	April 8	Qigong	9:00 AM
Sunday	April 9	EASTER All Ages Sunday Service: Healing and Renewal with Rev. Gy After Service Social Time	10:00 AM 11:00 AM
Tuesday	April 11	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	April 12	Sunday Services Committee Meeting	5:30 PM
Thursday	April 13	Civil Conversations Group	7:00 PM
Friday	April 14	Women's Book Group Marketing Team Meeting	1:00 PM 2:00 PM
Saturday	April 15	Qigong 3rd Saturday Breakfast Group	9:00 AM 9:00 AM
Sunday	April 16	Choir Practice Peace During War with Michael Wilder; UU Exploration for Kids After Service Social Time	9:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:00 AM
Monday	April 17	Sustainability Group	7:00 PM
Thursday	April 20	Exploring Anti-Racism Group	7:00 PM
Saturday	April 22	EARTH DAY—30-Day Sustainability Challenge Begins! Qigong	6:00 AM 9:00 AM
Sunday	April 23	Choir Practice Risk vs Safety with Rev. Gy; UU Exploration for Kids After Service Social Time Yoga Nidra	9:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:00 AM 7:00 PM
Tuesday	April 25	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	April 26	NEWSLETTER DEADLINE Mindfulness Practice with Eric	12:00 PM 7:00 PM
Thursday	April 27	A Conversation with Michigan Liberation	7:00 PM
Saturday	April 29	Qigong	9:00 AM
Sunday	April 30	Choir Practice Let Me Be Me with Shane Barrera; UU Exploration for Kids After Service Social Time 2023/2024 Budget Round Table	9:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:00 AM 11:30 AM



## UU Community Church is served by:

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

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

Chris Petersmark  
Music Director  
[christopherpetersmark@gmail.com](mailto:christopherpetersmark@gmail.com)  
Cell phone: 248-535-4197

## 2022-2023 Board of Trustees

Eric Nelson

Judy Pigg-Behrendt

Marsha Laya

Pat Timm

**The next Newsletter Deadline is  
Wednesday, April 26 at NOON**

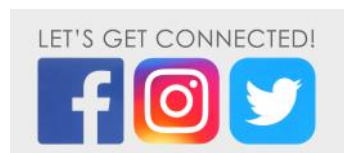
Please send submissions to:

**[uuccnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:uuccnewsletter@gmail.com)**

## *CommUUnity Matters*

### Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest Michigan

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



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