



CommUUunity Matters

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest Michigan

June 2023

JUNE SUNDAY SERVICES

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

June 4: Celebrating Our History: Emerson & Fuller with David Senecal and Miriam Epskamp

Unitarian Universalism names direct experience as an important source of religious and spiritual understanding, an idea that originated with 19th century Transcendentalism. Join us as we celebrate our history with a 'dramatic dialogue' between two important figures in the Transcendental movement, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Margaret Fuller.

June 11: Celebrating Freedom: Juneteenth with Jacquis Robertson

With Juneteenth around the corner, we will explore the holiday's origin, how it has evolved and changed to encompass what freedom looks like today, and what it truly means to celebrate Juneteenth.

June 18: Celebrating Pride: A Welcoming Renewal with Rev. Gy and Nick Tasko

Each of us has worth and dignity, and that worth includes our gender and our sexuality. As Unitarian Universalists we not only open our doors to people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, we celebrate diversity of sexuality and gender and see it as a spiritual gift.

June 25: Celebrating the Best of Us with the General Assembly Worship Team

On the final Sunday of our church year we will gather at 10:00 AM for potluck brunch and a photo montage on the big screen to celebrate all we have accomplished as a community over the last 12 months. At 11:00 AM, for those who might be interested, we will share the video of the Sunday Morning Worship Service streamed live from the UU General Assembly in Pittsburgh.



Spiritual Theme for June CELEBRATION

American actress Tracee Ellis Ross, has been quoted as saying, *I feel like our culture is so good at pulling other people down and being so judgmental, but there's space for all of us to be who we are. There's space for us to celebrate each other and root for each other and not take each other down.*

Celebration truly is an act of resistance. Celebration resists our tendency to focus on the negative. It resists the temptation of believing that there is more wrong in the world than right, that there is more that divides us from our neighbors than unites us. It resists the narrative that there is no hope to be found.

There will be many opportunities over the coming weeks for us to celebrate the different aspects of this religious community, from our long and storied history to our commitment to racial justice and LGBTQ+ equality, and to embrace joy and hope.

Question to ponder this month: *What can you do to bring more celebration, joy, and hope into your life?*

GUESTS IN THE PULPIT

We are excited to welcome these guests to our pulpit in June:

Unitarian Universalist Community Church member **David Senecal** is a native of Muskegon who has lived in the Kalamazoo area for over 50 years. He is a graduate of Western Michigan University and was a librarian for 35 years at the Kalamazoo Public Library until his retirement in 2005. He has enjoyed his post-working years engaging in his favorite pastimes and passions of music and theater performance and art classes at the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts. He serves on the UUCC Sunday Services Committee and as a lay leader. He enjoys sharing his perspective from the pulpit to such an appreciative audience. He also enjoys the companionship and love of his significant other, Lisa, and his cat, Felicity



Jacquis Robertson (She/Her) currently serves as the Co-Director of the HOPE for Us Conflict Engagement Team at the UUA. Prior to her work at the UUA, she served as the Vice President of Strategy and Engagement at Gryphon Place and had the honor of serving as the Director of Religious Education at Unitarian Universalist Community Church from 2014-2018

Jacquis has an educational background in Sociology, with a bachelor's in Comparative Religion from Western Michigan University. When Jacquis is not working, she can be found hanging with her fiancé and her dog and cat.

Our virtual Thoughtful Thursday conversation will be on a **TUESDAY** this month. We are excited to be joined by **Carol Higgins** on June 13 at 7 PM via Zoom for a **Climate Reality Conversation**.

Carol recently participated in a Leadership Corps training through the [Climate Reality Project](#). Founded by former US Vice President, Al Gore, the Climate Reality Project has a mission to catalyze a global solution to the climate crisis by recruiting, training, and mobilizing people of all walks of life to speed up energy transition worldwide and open the door for a better tomorrow for us all.

To join the Climate Reality Leadership Corp, Carol attended a special multiday online training that has helped her gain a deeper understanding of the climate crisis, the environmental justice issues connected to it, and the solutions at hand. She is excited to share what she learned during with us.

When not volunteering for the Climate Reality Project, Carol is a Master Gardener who serves on the Board for the St. Joseph Conservation District and Glen Oaks Community College. Her partner, Larry Higgins is a member of Unitarian Universalist Community Church.



FROM THE MINISTER



From the Minister

[Rev. Gy Ludvig-McCartney](#)

All that you touch, You Change. All that you Change Changes you.

The only lasting truth Is Change. God Is Change.

~ Octavia Butler: Parable of the Sower

I am sitting here reflecting on the decades I know as my life. The child I was would have never imagined or believed possible the life I live now. I was born into an oppressive political regime. I am the first one to have earned a Masters Degree in my family. The second Masters degree I earned in the US. While I always wished myself to the US, I never actually believed that I'd make it here. Look at me now!

You may wonder why am I reflecting on my life right now? Here's why: next weekend is Gay Pride in Kalamazoo, June being Pride month around the world. I am going to attend Pride representing a CHURCH as a minister, as a GAY minister!!! Think about that!

When I first became a minister, I was closeted and certain that I was heading to Hell. Now I am married to a woman, no longer headed to hell and ministering an awesome church!!! This is some good change!

Sometimes I get down and depressed when I see all the need, all the troubles in this world. In fact, there's been so much progress, too! Sure, sometimes it is two steps forward, one step back, but it is still progress.

A couple of weeks ago we held a drag show at our church and sure, there were a few protesters outside, still, we had a wonderful time, a fun time, celebrating life with its many manifestations. What a beautiful thing to allow instead of oppressing, suppressing, and denying another to be who they are.

Yes, I am thinking of change. Sometimes it's happening too fast, sometimes not fast enough. It is the only constant in our lives, though. If you don't believe me, look in the mirror. It is important to acknowledge good change. It inspires and sustains us to turn the bad changes around.

While I am going to celebrate Gay Pride this month, I am still looking forward to not needing Gay Pride. I am looking forward to the day when no one will bat an eye at another human being regardless of who they love, how they dress, or which gender they identify with. That day shall be the result of a series of really good changes. The ones I want to work for, the ones Unitarian Universalists have long worked for and will keep striving for till the work is done.

May our touch bring about good, life-giving changes. Everything we touch changes and everything we change changes us. May it be good. May it be so.

WIDENING THE CIRCLE

As we approach the end of the church year, the Sunday Services Committee shares this reflection of the past year.

Our theme for this year was “Widening The Circle” which reflected our congregation’s adoption and commitment to the UUA’s proposed 8th Principle. During August of last year, we had a month of services focused on Preparation for our theme. Rev. Gy challenged us with two services; “Are You Willing?” and “Have Courage”. We again welcomed our friend Rev. Larry Farris to explore “Curiosity” and Miriam Epskamp walked us through what she learned at GA about the Article II Study Commission.

In September we focused on Theology and with Rev. Gy’s thoughts on “Bad Theology Makes for Bad Ecology” and then our annual Water Communion. We also heard from Cameron Young about “Adaptive Ministry” and member David Senecal’s reflections on Stoicism.

While exploring “Wellness” in October, Chris Dilley shared how the Kalamazoo Food Coop is moving towards a deeper understanding of organizational change. Linda Cypret-Kilborune shared a perspective from the native American community. We ended the month with peace activist and musician Jim Scott.

November focused on Community with Rev. Harold Beu considering trends in society focused on harmful illusions rather than truth seeking. And Miriam, assisted by Nick Tasko and Amanda Nelson shared information on our annual “Guest at Your Table” program and a Bread communion.

During the holiday month we explored the theme of Hospitality with a message from local black farmer Chaz Rawls and again, we enjoyed the lovely winter solstice service from UUCC members and friends.

January started the New Year in consideration of living our values. Rev. Gy started the new year with our “Burning Bowl” and “Letter to Self” services. Rev. Dr. Megan Foley asked us to embrace a more active congregation and consider what may be next for Unitarian Universalism. Ebony Peace then reflected on change as a spiritual practice as we discuss revisions to our UU principles. We ended the month with five members and friends sharing how they personally live the values that provide meaning in their lives.

Liberation was our theme in February. Rev. Gy asked us “what does it take to live a truly authentic life while allowing others to do the same”. Then a UUCC anti-racism study group shared their individual thoughts on our dismantling structural racism. Friend Dorothy Brooks shared an inspiring story of her experience as a white teacher on a Navajo reservation. Dorothy also exhibited her photography that captured aspects of her time on the reservation. Robert Weir encouraged us to identify our gifts and have the courage to utilize them while living peacefully in service to others.

In March we looked at restoration and reparations as part of our year of Widening the Circle. Rev. Gy started the month of a Stewardship theme looking at how to nourish what we already have to invest in a bountiful return. They also asked us to work together making UUCC place that supports a variety of beliefs and realize the message of Unitarian Universalism that we can do together what

SUNDAY SERVICES TEAM

we cannot do apart. Levi Rickert, of Native News Online, talked about the bleak history of native boarding schools and its disastrous generational impact on native culture. Rev. Gy followed up with a reflection on how we may repair the damage caused to BIPOC communities from systemic racism in America.

In April, our theme investigated Innovation and Risk-Taking. Rev. Gy asked us to see how striving for perfection is keeping us from living a fulfilling life and they envisioned Easter as a time to heal and renew our planet. Michael Wilder shared how his life in a gang was turned around through forgiveness, reconciliation, and education. Michael's inspirational story became the documentary "Peace During War" and is supporting at-risk youth in our community. Shane Barrera, a.k.a. Miss Moscato, shared their experience embracing their inner queen and the importance of drag shows.

May was dedicated to the theme of Accountability. Rev. Gy was in the pulpit the entire month. "Living In Right Relationship", "Hindsight is 20/20?", "100 Years of Flower Communion" and "Where is the Line" were their titles. Each week provided thoughtful words to consider.

Looking forward to our "Celebration" month in June, we'll hear from Miriam Epskamp, DRE, and David Senecal about the relationship between Ralph Waldo Emerson and Margaret Fuller. We will proudly welcome back Jacquis Robertson, our former DRE and we will end the month with a service from the UUA's General Assembly.

The Sunday Services committee is proud of the diversity of services we were once again able to provide while staying within our allotted budget. We try to continually improve the experience both for those physically in the sanctuary and virtually at home.

Following our committee's commitment to allowing for knowledge transfer and a well-deserved respite we are thankful for the work of Regena Nelson and Kimberly Ridley as they end their time on the committee. And are happy to welcome new members Nicky Leigh and returning member Pat Fuehr to next year's committee.

Regards, Joe Calme, Regena Nelson, Kimberly Ridley, and David Senecal



To my beloved community,
 Words cannot express my feelings, nor my thanks for all the support you give me. Your help in the production of "Slipping" was invaluable to me, from the generous donation/sponsorship from the board, to the volunteers who manned the door, to those who attended the show, and all the kind words you had for the performances. Your support and thoughtfulness will always be in my heart and in my mind.
 In love and peace,
 Mary Roscoe, Artistic Director, Open House Theatre Co.

CARING COMMUNITY



JUNE CARING COMMUNITY NEWS

It isn't the big pleasures that count the most; it's making a big deal out of the little ones.
— Jean Webster

Joys, Concerns, and Member News:

What a marvelous May it was at UUC! On the first weekend, over 100 people came to see the play put on by Open House Theatre Company. The crew and cast (which included UUC thespians **David Senecal, Steve Tasko, and Darby Fetzer**) did a wonderful job. There was laughter, tears, and rousing applause. Kudos to UUC member and OHTC Artistic Director, **Mary Roscoe**, who was truly the driving force behind the production.

On the second weekend in May, the sanctuary was packed with people for the Celebration of Life for our founding member **John Folz**. Family and friends shared many heart warming stories about John and expressed gratitude for his long and fulfilling life. **Bev Folz** is grateful for all the UUC folks who helped make the service as lovely and special as it was.

On the third weekend, the sanctuary was filled to the brim again this time with a much younger crowd at our first ever Drag Show. **Nick Tasko** is delighted about how the event went and grateful to everyone who helped make it possible.

We enjoyed some lovely special music in May. **Judy Halseth** did a wonderful job as our substitute pianist one Sunday. **Nancy Calme** and her friend **Deb Inglefield** delighted us with some French horn duets. And the **UUC Choir** under the direction of our Music Director, **Chris Petersmark** lifted their voices in song. We are grateful for all who share their musical gifts with us.

Friends who have moved away from Portage are grateful for their continued connections to UUC. **Stace Danielson** knows we are sending love and support even though she hasn't been able to join us on Zoom lately, **Judy Oliver** finds it a source of comfort to know that connecting via Zoom is always available and that it allows her to participate in this community from her new home in NJ.

We hold all who have struggled with health issues recently in our hearts: **Rev. Gy, Bob and Barb McWhorter, Ken Kurtz, Nick and Grayson Tasko, Mary Roscoe, Judy Pigg-Behrendt, Sherrie Vandeputte, Lee Smittendorf**, and many others.

We send love to those whose have family members who have suffered or are suffering: **Darby Fetzer, Pat Timm, Marsha Laya, Regena and Eric Nelson, Miriam Epskamp**, and others.

We send congratulations to who all who are celebrating important milestones such as **Kelin Michael** who received her PhD in Art History from Emory University, **Amanda Nelson** and **Isaac Epskamp-Hunt** who made the Deans Lists this semester, and to **Kathryn Ragains-Wilson** and **Michael Wilson** who are celebrating their wedding anniversary in June.

We also send our loving thoughts to those who have suffered disappointment and set backs. We know that life's journey can be bumpy sometimes. Remember, you are enough and you are loved.
(More Caring News on page 7)

SUMMER SABBATICAL

Happy Birthday to YOU!

Let's sing "Happy Birthday!" to our members and friends born in June: **Rita Stevens, Judy Pigg-Behrendt, Darby Fetzer, Brent Ridley, and Bob McWhorter**. And as the Caring Column will be on vacation next month, we send early birthday wishes to our friends born in July: **Tim Michael, John Mais, Alex Brozovich, Eric Nelson, and Brinna Michael**. If your birthday was not on the list, pass it on to the church office so you get included next year.

Remembering Friends

Give some thought to our friends **Marge Hallam** who passed on June 1, 2014 and **David Adams** who passed away on July 22, 2009.

Welcome New Visitors:

We have enjoyed visits from **Joyce Thomas, Kali and Nick Newman, Brooke Lamprecht-Carson, and Elimey Duhart** recently. We are so glad you joined us!

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 UUCC office:

269-324-7262 or uucommunity@gmail.com.



Summer Sabbatical

There will be no regular Sunday Services at UU Community Church during the month of July. Please use the time away to rest and recharge. Regular services will resume on August 6.

There will also be no Thoughtful Thursday gatherings during the July sabbatical. Small groups and committees may choose to meet (or not). Social events may be planned by various individuals and groups. Please watch your Weekly Email for the most up-to-date information.

Miriam works throughout the July break. You can contact her via email, text, or phone as usual.

LEADERSHIP



The Board of Trustees met on May 3. Here are a few of the things they accomplished:

- Finalized the documents for the June 4 Annual Meeting.
- Made plans for volunteer recognition awards
- Received updates about the Appreciative Inquiry Projects and the engagement with a Marketing Consultant.

The May meeting minutes had not been finalized by the time the newsletter went to print. We will share a link to those in a future weekly email.

The next regular Board meeting will take place via Zoom **Wednesday, June 7 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](#).

**UU Community Church of Southwest Michigan
Annual Meeting of the Congregation
June 4, 2023 at 11:15 AM
In person and on Zoom**



Pledges and Receipts

The 2022/2023 programming and fiscal year is almost complete. If you need reimbursement from the church, please get all receipts turned in to Joe Calme by June 15.

If you made a financial pledge for the year spanning July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023, you will receive an email from Kimberly Ridley in early June with your giving statement to date attached.

If you do not receive the email by June 15, please contact Kimberly at ridleyk@hotmail.com or 269-569-3658.

To match pledges and church income in the same financial year, it would be helpful if you can remit all pledge dollars by the end of June. If you make a payment after June 30 for the 2022/2023 year please note "22/23" in the memo line of your check. If you are prepaying (before July 1) on your 2023/2024 pledge, please note "prepay 23/24" in the memo line.

As always, please review your records and let Kimberly know if you find any discrepancies which require correction.

Your contributions and donations are sincerely appreciated!

PROGRAM COUNCIL



Program Council—Where TOGETHER—We Get Stuff Done!

Everyone - members, friends, visitors—is invited to help us create vibrant and engaging programming at Unitarian Universalist Community Church through our Program Council. The Council meets on the second Sunday of the month at around 11:20 AM. If you have ideas about things you would like to see happen at UUCC, bring them to program council! Your input is important to us.

Program Council is on summer break until August but we will want to hit the ground running at our first meeting on Sunday, August 13 by voting for our Generosity Sunday recipients.

For those of you who may not know, five times a year UUCC holds a special collection to support non-profit organizations whose work aligns with our values. One of those recipients is always the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC). They partner with organizations around the world doing disaster relief work and supporting human rights. We have participated in the UUSC Guest at Your Table Program for many years. The other four recipient organizations are nominated by congregants and voted on by the Program Council. In the past we have supported groups like Planned Parenthood, First Day Shoe Fund, Face Off Theatre, OutFront Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo Climate Crisis Coalition, Ecumenical Senior Center, and others.

To get a head start on the voting process, we will be collecting your nominations for Generosity Sunday recipients by email during the months of June and July. Your summer assignment is to spend some time thinking about organizations you have a relationship with, whose work aligns with our Unitarian Universalist values, and that would benefit from a few extra dollars.

Please send your nominations to the office (uucommunity@gmail.com) and we will include them on our Generosity Sunday ballot. At our August meeting we will finalize our voting and be ready to hold our first special collection in September.

Thank you for your support!



Our Generosity Sunday recipient for June is the [Kalamazoo Coalition for the Unhoused](#). Formed in 2020 in response to the camps of unhoused individuals that sprung up during the Covid-19 crisis, the Coalition's mission is to bring individuals and organizations together to coordinate efforts, increase impact, and empower change among the unhoused population in the Kalamazoo area.

If it is yours to do, there are several ways to give to our special collection for the **Kalamazoo Coalition for the Unhoused**. You can place a check made out to UUCC with Generosity Sunday the memo in the offering basket anytime in June. You can mail your check to our building. You can use a debit or credit card when you give online using the church website or the Vanco app on your phone. Be sure to choose Generosity Sunday in the menu.

We are hoping to schedule a visit from a Coalition volunteer sometime in June so we can learn more about the work they do and how we can support them. Watch your weekly email for details.

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

JUNE 13: A CONVERSATION WITH ...

Our Thoughtful Thursday featuring a guest speaker will be on **TUESDAY** this month. We are delighted to be joined by **Carol Higgins** on **June 13** at **7:00 PM** for a conversation about the Climate Reality Project. You can learn more about this conversation on page 2.

JUNE 15 EXPLORING ANTI-RACISM

Our Exploring Anti-Racism Group will meet on **Thursday, June 15** at **7:00 PM**. Please join Rev. Gy and Board President Eric Nelson for a discussion about **Systemic and Structural Racism** and the actions we can take to dismantle these systems.



Emotional Intelligence Workshop

As a fundraiser for UU Community Church, Darby Fetzer is offering a Two-Part **Emotional Intelligence Workshop** that will take place on two consecutive Saturdays: **June 17** and **June 24** from **9 AM to noon** at the church building.

This exclusive in-person course will incorporate interactive discussion on the core competencies of Emotional Intelligence including: Recognizing Patterns, Navigating Emotions, Exercising Optimism and Increasing Empathy. Prepare to unpack vital information and powerful tools required to deepen our own natural Emotional Intelligence so that we may communicate more effectively in every relationship, including our relationship with ourselves.

Darby Fetzer, holds four certifications in EQ (Emotional Quotient) and has had the pleasure of facilitating high-impact EQ courses to a range of audiences including: WMU, Kellogg Community College, The Recovery Institute, Momentum, IAAP and Allegan County.

Class size for this workshop is limited to 10 to ensure that each participant receives individualized attention. Six spots were sold at our Service Auction in October so only four (4) spots are available. The cost is \$100 per person and 100% of the fees will go to UUCC. To secure your place in Emotional Intelligence Workshop, please contact Darby at darbylynnfetzer@gmail.com. Pre-registration is required. No walk-ins please.



Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom. —Viktor E. Frankl

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Spiritual Practice via Zoom

Our online opportunities to engage in spiritual practice will continue throughout the month of June. Newcomers are always welcome to join any of these sessions. A large body of scientific research suggests that adopting a consistent spiritual practice can help to reduce stress and anxiety and increase life satisfaction, mental clarity, and general wellbeing. Now is a great time to join in one of our offerings.



Every Tuesday and Saturday at 9:00 AM via Zoom you can enjoy a **Qigong** session with supportive UUC members and friends. Qigong is an ancient Chinese practice that combines gentle stretching, self-massage, and deep breathing.

Click [HERE](#) for the TUESDAY Qigong Zoom link. Meeting ID: 697 338 090 Passcode: 138550
Click [HERE](#) for the SATURDAY Qigong Zoom link. Meeting ID: 977 5286 6838 Passcode: 383810



On the 4th Wednesday of each month at 7:00 PM you can join Eric Nelson, UUC member and lead facilitator at Stress Less Kalamazoo, for drop-in guided **Mindfulness Practice**.

Click [HERE](#) to join the Mindfulness with Eric Zoom Meeting . ID: 833 5090 0441



On the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month at 7:00 PM, Daring to Rest™ facilitator, Erica Guthaus, will lead **Yoga Nidra** practice. Yoga Nidra is a deeply relaxing form of guided meditation that anyone can do. Yoga Nidra will be on hiatus in July and August so don't miss the opportunity to try Yoga Nidra in June.

Click [HERE](#) to join the Yoga Nidra Zoom Meeting ID: 922 4471 7815 Passcode: 457428

Water Communion 2023

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

If you would like to participate in your Unitarian Universalist Community Church's 2023 Water Communion, please plan to collect a small sample of water from a special place you visit over the summer to add to a communal bowl in September. If you are lucky enough to be able to travel, the water can be from a lake, river, or ocean you pass along the way. If you are staying close to home bring water from a pond, a fountain, or a backyard hose. The important part is that the water represents a place or experience that gives meaning to your life or provides sustenance for your soul.



SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

Building Beloved Community One Conversation at a Time



The Civil Conversations Group is a dynamic gathering where we glean a deeper understanding of today's hotly contested topics and engage our individual perspectives in discussion. Every month we intentionally set the stage for informed and safe engagement to help us learn the skills we need to have authentic and meaningful conversations with friends, family, and others who might think differently than we do.

During the 2022-2023 church year, the group explored a wide variety of topics including Separation of Church and State, Implicit Bias, Book Banning and Censorship, Wokeness, and the use of the word Church in UUCC's name. The Civil Conversations Group always provides rich food for thought. One regular participant commented, "I love these sessions! I always learn something new."

The group will take a break in during the summer months but plans to return in September for more civil conversations in the new church year. If you have any ideas for topics of discussion or how to engage people in the wider community in these conversations, please contact Darby Fetzer (269-569-5557 or darbylynnfetzer@gmail.com).

Finding Joy Through a Smaller Environmental Foot Print



The folks in UUCC's **Sustainability Group** meet once a 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.

Gardens and gardening were on many people's mind at the group's last meeting following the City of Portage's decision to remove our Rain Garden as part of their construction on Shaver Road.

Everyone was understandably disappointed. The good news is that Eric, Regena, and Miriam were able to save many of the native plants before the road crews began work. They relocated them on the north side of the property.

Many people in the group have been busy planting flowers and vegetables in their yards. Did you know that small scale, back-yard gardening that uses techniques that build and protect healthy soil can actually help sequester carbon from the atmosphere and store it in the ground?



Gardening for the climate is something everyone can do, whether you are limited to a sunny windowsill or you happen to own several acres in Cass County. [Green America](#) has some great tips on practices to help you get started.

Composting is one of the practices that is recommended to build soil health. The Sustainability Group is very interested in supporting a community composting project at UUCC and look forward to learning more about it in the coming months.

In place of their regular meeting this month, the Sustainability Group plans to attend the Thoughtful Tuesday gathering with Carol Higgins on June 13 to learn more about the Climate Reality Project.

CONNECTION



The UUCC Sustainability Group invites YOU to their second annual **Vegetarian Feast** on Saturday, **June 10** at **Milham Park** from **11 AM to 2 PM**.

This year we will be meeting up with our fellow UUs from Peoples Church to share our favorite meat-free dishes and connect with others in our community who are passionate about sustainability and addressing Climate Change.

Please plan to bring a vegetarian dish to pass, and because we are hoping to keep the gathering as waste-free as possible, your own sustainable table setting that includes a plate, a bowl, cutlery, a napkin, and a beverage cup. We will have a jug with water to drink.

The South Pavilion at Milham Park is right across from Loy Norrix HS. It has large picnic tables, electricity for your crockpot, a grill if you want to cook up some veggie burgers, and plenty of cover in case it's hot or rainy. There is also a new playground for kids so be sure to bring the whole family!

There is a sign up sheet for the Vegetarian Feast at the Welcome table to help us gauge how many people to expect. If you have any questions, please contact Miriam (uucommunity@gmail.com)

3rd Saturday Breakfast



On Saturday, **June 17** 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

Women's Book Group

The UUCC Women's Book Group finished up their program year in May. They will hold their Annual Meeting on July 14 to choose their book selections for 2023-2024 books and to elect a new Chair.

Book Group members are reminded to send Stephanie Grathwol their recommendations (one fiction, one non-fiction) in June.

If you have any questions about Book Group, please contact Stephanie at sargg.64@gmail.com



If you are looking for something to read while the Book Group is on hiatus, check out this list of recommended summer reading from University of California at Berkley: [\(Re\)Writing the Rules](#).

New on the Art Wall

Almost ten years ago, UUCC folks of all ages and artistic abilities were invited to submit an 8x10 canvas to a community art installation focused on the theme of the [Flaming Chalice](#), the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith. As our program year comes to an end and UUCC looks forward to a new year filled with opportunities for learning and growth, we invite members of our community to revisit the images from years ago and submit new artwork to this installation. Canvases can be picked up by the RE bulletin board at the back of the sanctuary. We look forward to seeing how the meaning of the Flaming Chalice has changed and stayed the same for us.



GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Registration for the dual-platform Unitarian Universalist General Assembly (GA) 2023: Faithfully Becoming is open and there is still time to commit to taking part in what is sure to be the largest gathering of UUs this year. The in-person event will take place in Pittsburgh. Registration info and a listing of available workshops can be found at: <https://www.uua.org/ga/registration>.



There are also opportunities for non-registrants to participate in GA at no cost. Several worship services and all general sessions are open to the public and can be watched from the Unitarian Universalist Association website: <https://www.uua.org/ga/off-site/2023>

General Sessions -June 21-25: Watch as the business of the Association is conducted in real-time.

Service of the Living Tradition— Thursday, June 22 at 7 PM: Led by the Ministries and Faith Development Staff Group, this service honors fellowshiped and credentialed religious leaders; remembering those who have died, recognizing those who have completed active service, and welcoming those who have received fellowship or credentialed status in the past year. The service includes a collection to benefit the Living Tradition Fund.

Synergy Bridging Worship—Friday, June 23 at 7 PM: This will be a transformative, multigenerational worship. Be inspired and illuminated at a celebration of treasured worship elements, rites of passage, and brilliant contemporary music. This service includes a collection to benefit the Katie Tyson Fund for Youth and Young Adult Ministries.

Sunday Morning Worship— Sunday, June 25 at 11 AM: The service is the largest annual gathering of UUs joining in worship. This year the service will be led by Rev. Manish K. Mishra-Marzetti, senior minister of the First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor, Michigan. If you would like to watch the service on the big screen in the UUCS sanctuary, plan to stick around after the end-of-year potluck brunch.



PRIDE



In June of 1969, patrons and supporters of the Stonewall Inn in New York City, led by trans and gender non-conforming people of color, staged an uprising to resist the police harassment and persecution of the LGBTQ+ community. We celebrate LGBTQ+ Pride each June to honor those who resisted and to celebrate the many identities and experiences of self that make up the human family.

UUC's commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusion and empowerment doesn't just happen in June. It is something we support all year round because we believe that Love is Love. Check out some of the things we did this year to make our values real:

Observances:

- The kids in RE learned about the history of **Coming Out Day** and made a bulletin board to share upstairs.
- We shared information about **Trans Day of Remembrance** in newsletters, announcements, social media and emails. The kids in RE heard the story *I am Jazz* about a young trans person and made trans pride pins for people to add to their name tags. The youth learned the history of the Day of Remembrance and made a bulletin board with pictures and stories of trans folks who lost their lives this year just for being who they are.
- On **World AIDS Day** the kids raised awareness by making ornaments with facts about AIDS and using them to decorate a Christmas Tree they displayed in the Community Room
- For **Trans Day of Visibility**, we asked folks to write words of encouragement to the trans community and then took photos of them holding up their words. We put the photos together into a video which we shared on social media and during a Sunday service.
- The kids in RE learned the history of **National Day of Silence** and some shocking statistics about LGBTQ+ youth experiences with bullying in school. They made a bulletin board to display upstairs to share what they learned with the adults in the congregation.
- For **International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT)** the kids in RE talked about bullying and made a banner of pink triangles to hang in the church window. We posted a photo of it on social media on IDAHOBIT (May 17).

Adult Education:

- Seven UUC folks participated in the UUA on-demand webinar **Speaking Up for Trans Lives**
- Sixteen UUC folks attended a zoom call with the **Tracy Hall, Executive Director of OutFront Kalamazoo** to talk about their areas of concern for LGBTQ+ equity and justice in our community and in the state and how we as individuals and as a faith community can support the work that OutFront is doing.

Sunday Services:

- We will celebrate **Pride Sunday** on June 18. Rev. Gy and our youth member, Nick Tasko will work together to present this service.

Projects:

- We held a **Drag Workshop and Show** to show our commitment to LGBTQ+ visibility and acceptance.
- We raised money for **OutFront Kalamazoo's Legacy House** that provides support and shelter for LGBTQ+ young adults who are experiencing homelessness.
- We will partner with Peoples Church to staff a Unitarian Universalist table at **Outfront Kalamazoo's Pride** event at Arcadia Festival Site on Saturday, June 3 from 12-6 PM



OPPORTUNITIES

Help to End Gun Violence

There will be an event to mark **National Gun Violence Awareness Day** on **Monday, June 5** at Bronson Park.

This will be a memorable and fitting event, lifting survivor voices, working to disarm hate, and committing to action to end gun violence.

Fifteen+ community organizations have signed to participate.

If you are a survivor of gun violence or want to remember someone taken by gun violence at the June 5 event, please bring a small photo or note of remembrance to place on a remembrance board.

People are encouraged to begin gathering at 4:30 PM for networking opportunities. The program will start promptly at 5:00 PM and will finish by 6:30 PM.



PLOV Potluck

Our justice partners at Portage **Linking Our Voices** are planning a family friendly potluck at UU Community Church on **Sunday, June 11 at 4 PM.**

If you are interested in learning more about this group and the diversity, equity, and inclusion advocacy they are doing in the community, this would be a great opportunity to get to know them better.

If you have questions or if you would like to RSVP for the potluck, email PLOV at

portagelinkingvoices@gmail.com

It is Jam Time!

Freya Lake will offer homemade fruit jams for sale as a fundraiser for the Uucc church again this year. The 8-ounce jars come in a variety of flavors and are \$6 each. The first flavor on offer will be strawberry-rhubarb.

According to her many faithful supporters, Freya's jam is simply the BEST to be found. Even if you personally do not consume jam, know that all jams make GREAT GIFTS for friends and relatives for any occasion.

Please contact Freya if you would like to be added to her Jam mailing list. She sends out an email order form as different varieties become available. Arrangements will be made with you for delivery: pick-up at church or pick-up from Freya's home. Thank you all for your continuing support of this important Uucc fundraiser.





wear orange

RSVP

Monday
June 5, 2023

BRONSON PARK
Kalamazoo

Gather at 4:30
Program
5:00-7:00pm

Please RSVP!



bit.ly/2023wokzoo

JUNETEENTH

Kalamazoo is offering up many ways to celebrate Juneteenth, the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States and, the newest designated federal holiday. Check out this list of things going on and visit [Juneteenth Kalamazoo](#) on Facebook to see more.

Kalamazoo Juneteenth 2023

FRIDAY the 16th

12-5 p.m. | at The Space
Young Gifted and Black Exhibit presented by Soul Artistry LLC

5-8 p.m. | at Kalamazoo Valley Museum
Black Film Festival: Summer of Soul presented by Soul Artistry LLC

SATURDAY the 17th

11 a.m. - 2 p.m. | at Kalamazoo Institute of Arts
Community paper quilt project, gallery tours, and family activities, including a special Art Detectives event at 11 a.m.

12-2 p.m. | at Collect and Recover Black
Essential Space/Delano Farms

Art of Fact Ancestry and Sounds of Our Stories Workshop

2-6 p.m. | at Collect and Recover
Black Essential Space/Delano Farms

Father's Day Brunch presented by the Institute of Public Scholarship

@Juneteenthkzoo

more... SATURDAY the 17th

2-6 p.m. | at The Space
1st Annual GeoCon with comic books, cosplayers, artists, games, and more

3-7 p.m. | at Bronson Park
Rooted Annual Juneteenth Family Reunion with Community, read & queer picnic in the park, RYDDE performance, local musicians, children's activities, vendors, and food trucks

6-9 p.m. | at Black Arts & Cultural Center
Speak Easy/Open Mic and Black Owned Business vendors

SUNDAY the 18th

12-5 p.m. | at Bell's Eccentric Cafe
Bell's and The Gilmore present: 1-3:30 p.m. | DJ Disobedience presents Classically Black wsg Brandon Fitzpatrick 4-5 p.m. | Pianist BLKBOK

MONDAY the 19th

5-8 p.m. | at 503 W. North Street, Kalamazoo
S.H.A.R.E. presents music, food, games, info on voting rights, and Black history lingo



Our justice partners at [Interfaith Strategies for Advocacy and Action in the Community](#) (ISAAC) will hold their **Annual Meeting** on **Tuesday, July 11**. YOU are invited to join them for dinner and to hear about and celebrate the Beloved Community Work of ISAAC!

Dinner - **6:30 PM**—**St. Luke's** Dining Room

Annual Meeting - **7:00 PM** - in person and livestreamed

RSVP is requested. Please contact Miriam

RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION



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

We had a Drag Show! And what a Drag Show it was!

The turnout exceeded our expectations by a long shot. I had set out about 60 chairs set out for the event but a half an hour before start time, people began pouring in through our doors and I knew we were going to need more. All sorts of people started lending a hand, some I knew and many I didn't. We brought out stack after stack of chairs from the back room. I estimate there were around 140 people in attendance.

And do you know what? So many of them were young folks—teenagers, college students, and young adults. It was a joy for me to see. Some of them came because they were curious about drag. Some came to show support for the LGBTQ+ community. And some just came to have fun.

And from where I was standing at the back of the sanctuary, it seemed like people were having a good time. There was laughter; there was cheering. It was a celebration and it felt good.

Of course, this isn't the part of the story that was shared by the media. They wrote about the protesters, the counter protesters, and the arrests. I am sure that some of you might feel that the notoriety we gained from this event does not reflect well upon UUCC. My feeling is that we should be proud for having the courage to stand up for our beliefs. The statement that Rev. Gy, Eric, and I (with help from Eric's sister Deb) wrote about the event sums things up pretty well:

Unitarian Universalist Community Church is an inclusive and affirming community. Our denomination has been on the forefront of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer equality for more than 50 years. Our recent Drag Me to Church event was held in alignment to our values and principles.

We are grateful to Miss Moscato, Gretta Vendetta, Savannah Hawthorne, and Nomi D'shire for putting on such a joyful show and for answering everyone's questions about drag with such honesty and good humor. We are grateful to the many UUCC volunteers who helped make the event possible and to the staff of OutFront Kalamazoo and to the Unitarian Universalist Association for all their assistance. We are grateful to the members of the community who came out to enjoy the show and who gave generously to our collection for Legacy House, which provides shelter and support for LGBTQ+ youth ages 18-24, who are navigating homelessness in Kalamazoo County. We are especially grateful to members of the Portage Public Safety Department and other members of law enforcement whose presence kept everyone safe.

We will not let the politicization of diversity that is occurring today alter the course of our mission and vision – of who we are as a community. We will continue, with love and compassion, to support safety and justice for the LGBTQ community.

May it be so.

DATE	JUNE UU EXPLORATION PLANS	LOCATION	VOLUNTEERS
June 4	LGBTQ+ History—Stonewall Uprising	UUCC	Eric and Regena Nelson
June 11	Service Prep Day	UUCC	Kimberly Ridley
June 18	UU Identity—Summer Solstice	UUCC	Isaac Epskamp-Hunt
June 25	Multigenerational Service	UUCC	N/A



JUNE 2023



DAY	DATE	EVENT	TIME
Thursday	June 1	Stewardship Committee Meeting	1:00 PM
Saturday	June 3	Qigong UUC at Pride	9:00 AM 12—6 PM
Sunday	June 4	Celebrating Our History: Emerson and Fuller with David Senecal and Miriam UU Exploration for Kids After Service Social Time Annual Meeting	10:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:00 AM 11:15 AM
Tuesday	June 6	Qigong Growth Team	9:00 AM 12:00 PM
Wednesday	June 7	Board of Trustees Meeting	6:30 PM
Saturday	June 10	Qigong Vegetarian Feast at Milham Park	9:00 AM 11AM—2PM
Sunday	June 11	Celebrating Freedom: Juneteenth with Jacquis Robertson UU Exploration for Kids After Service Social Time PLOV Potluck Yoga Nidra with Erica	10:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:00AM 4:00 PM 7:00 PM
Tuesday	June 13	Qigong A Climate Reality Conversation with Carol Higgins	9:00 AM 7:00 PM
Thursday	June 16	Exploring Anti-Racism	7:00 PM
Saturday	June 17	Qigong Emotional Intelligence Workshop—Part 1 ` 3rd Saturday Breakfast Group at Garcias	9:00 AM 9AM -12PM 9:00 AM
Sunday	June 18	FATHERS DAY Celebrating Pride: A Welcoming Renewal with Rev. Gy and Nick Tasko UU Exploration for Kids After Service Social Time	9:00 AM 10:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:00 AM
Monday	June 19	JUNETEENTH	
Tuesday	June 20	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	June 21	NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	12:00 PM
Saturday	June 23	Qigong Emotional Intelligence Workshop—Part 2	9:00 AM 9:00 AM
Sunday	June 25	Celebrating the Best of Us: Potluck Brunch Sunday Worship from GA: Ever Willing: Becoming the People Our World Needs NO Religious Exploration for Kids	10:00 AM 11:00 AM
Tuesday	June 27	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	June 28	Mindfulness Practice with Eric	12:00 PM

UU Community Church is served by:

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2022-2023 Board of Trustees

Eric Nelson

Judy Pigg-Behrendt

Marsha Laya

Pat Timm

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

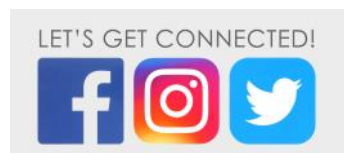
Please send submissions to:

uuccnewsletter@gmail.com

CommUUnity Matters

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NOW
ON

