



# CommUUunity Matters

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest Michigan

September 2023

## SEPTEMBER SUNDAY SERVICES

Sundays at 10:00 AM. Onsite, [Facebook](#), or Zoom.

### September 3: *What Holds Us Together?*

with Rev. Gy

People find a sense of belonging in many places... in families, in ethnic/national groups, in faith traditions. For many of these groups, the power of belonging seems to reside in sameness. Unitarian Universalism is a bit different. Join us as we reflect on the unique way we find belonging in diversity and difference.

Zoom Meeting ID: 919 0767 9446. Click [HERE](#) to register.

### September 10: *Homecoming*

with Rev. Gy

As summer comes to an end we will celebrate our annual Water Communion as a ritual of welcome and homecoming as we begin the new church year. This service invites you to come home to a place where your spirit may be fed and your soul may flourish in deep peace and acceptance. Be sure to bring a little water that represents a place or an experience of importance to you.

Zoom Meeting ID: 934 8961 3340 Click [HERE](#) to register.

### September 17: *Black Lives Matter*

with Ebony Peace

Reflecting on the renewed focus on the Black Lives Matter movement and abuse of power by some police officers and politicians, what can we do to support change in our communities? How do we invite our neighbors to join us in starting 'good trouble?' We will search for truth and meaning around race, humanity, and justice. We will consider belonging, and how humble invitations can create enormous results.

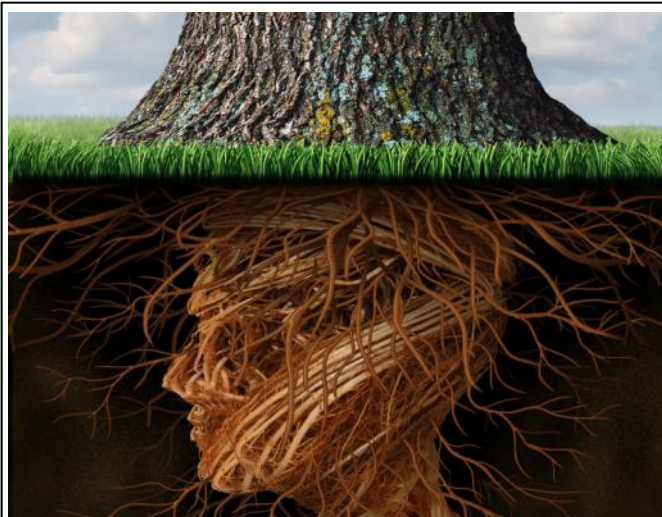
Zoom Meeting ID: 936 4761 1468 Click [HERE](#) to register.

### September 24: *Exploring the Roots of our Beliefs*

with UUCC Members and Friends.

Retired UU Minister Fred Campbell proposes that within Unitarian Universalism there are four primary theological camps: humanism, naturalism, mysticism, and theism. During the course of this service, we will define each of these and invite UUCC members and friends to reflect on ways they fit or don't fit into each camp.

Zoom Meeting ID: 951 1573 8281 Click [HERE](#) to register.



## Spiritual Theme for September NURTURING OUR ROOTS

In the UU religious exploration curriculum, A Place of Wholeness, Greta Anderson writes:

*Have you ever thought of Unitarian Universalism as an ancestral tree? It can be awe-inspiring to see the numerous roots and branches that make up our religious family.*

*The "roots" of the tree are the values we hold dear, such as reason, tolerance and freedom, hope, faith, and love.*

*These roots have brought forth many ancestors, carrying these values out into the world. Though they have passed before us, they are still somehow with the family, kept alive in memories and stories, or the values they passed on to us.*

*None of these ancestors asks us to be exactly like them. Rather, the tradition they represent offers us security, inspiration, and a place to start our "free and responsible search for truth."*

Take time this month to consider the roots of our faith and how they support and nurture you on your journey through life.

# GUESTS IN OUR PULPIT

***We are excited to welcome these guests to our pulpit in September:***



**Ebony Peace** is a Lay Community Minister whose ministries focus on (1) workplace justice, (2) liberal sexuality education, and (3) leadership development. She is an adult Our Whole Lives (OWL) sexuality education facilitator. As a part of her ministries, she serves as a co-facilitator for the District of Columbia Center for the LGBT Community's job club.

She serves as the Special Advisor to the Board of Directors at The Unitarian Universalist Society for Community Ministries (UUSCM) and is the 2022 Winner of the Charles Billings Prize for Excellence in Preaching awarded by Meadville Lombard Theological School.

A life-long Unitarian Universalist from Maryland, she holds a B.A. in Sociology, a M.S. in Strategic Human Resources and Organization Development, and a Master of Arts in Leadership Studies (MALS) from Meadville Lombard Theological School. She completed her seminary internship at All Souls Church Unitarian in Washington, D.C. where she focused on adult spiritual development, social justice, and worship arts.

She has a professional background as a clinical sociologist practicing in human resources, training, facilitation, and career consulting. Ebony is a college Instructor, having taught courses in Business, General Education, and Sociology at three schools.

In her spare time, she enjoys writing poetry and stories. Her poems have been published in the 2021 Inspirit anthology and in *BLUU Notes: An Anthology of Love, Justice, and Liberation*.

Could **YOU** be a guest speaker? Retired UU Minister Fred Campbell proposes that within Unitarian Universalism, there are four primary theological camps: humanism, naturalism, mysticism, and theism. Here is how Campbell defines each of these camps according to Rev. Elizabeth Stevens:

**Humanism** is a school of thought that “finds life’s meaning within the human community—past, present and future.” This is to say that the ‘why’ of life, the transcendent, resides in our human capacity to think, create, understand, and change.

**Naturalism** is a school of thought that “understands that humans are part of the natural world and draws meaning from that context.” You might be a naturalist if your spiritual practice includes looking up at the night sky or walking in the forest or looking out at the ocean...or, like one former president of our UUA, looking at images sent back from the Hubble space telescope.

**Mystics**, according to Campbell, “have had an experience of union with some transcendent whole, an experience so powerful that it shapes their values.” This feeling of “oneness” is sometimes experienced through meditation or mindfulness practice.

**Theists**, in Campbell’s words, “know that God exists, and their values derive from this knowing and this relationship.”

If you identify with one of these belief systems and would be willing to reflect on your beliefs during a Sunday service, please contact Joe Calme ([joe.calme@gmail.com](mailto:joe.calme@gmail.com)) and become a guest in our pulpit on **September 24**. We would love to hear about the “roots” of your beliefs.



# DISCOVER INNER HARMONY

You will not want to miss these upcoming opportunities for nurturing your spiritual roots, embracing resilience, and discovering inner harmony and self-acceptance:

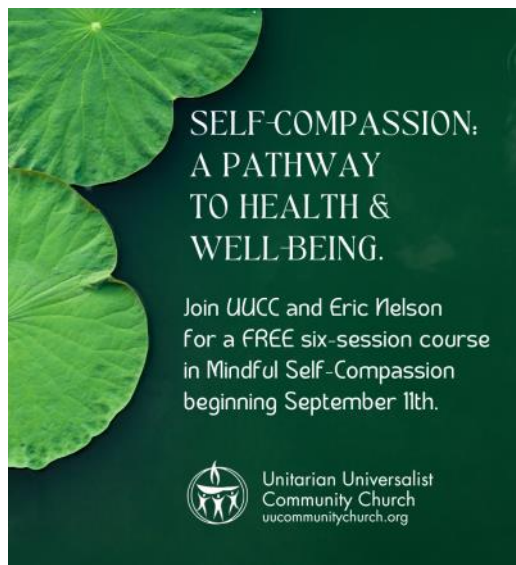
On **September 7** at **7 PM** on Zoom, **Mary Beth Thomas**, a trained IFS practitioner and yoga expert, will introduce **Internal Family Systems** (IFS), a transformative approach that views individuals as intricate systems of inner parts led by a True core Self. Learning how to embrace this complexity can lead to inner harmony and growth. Mary Beth will also highlight yoga and meditation's roles in this journey.



Visit <https://tinyurl.com/uuccifs> to register for this conversation with Mary Beth Thomas. Zoom Meeting ID: 973 5065 1017

Eric Nelson will offer a Course in Mindful Self-Compassion on Zoom starting on **September 11**.

This course blends Mindfulness and Self-Compassion practices to equip participants with tools to navigate life's challenges and enhance emotional well-being. Sessions will begin on Monday, September 11, and continue, every other week through November 13. The sessions will be held on Zoom, from 7:00 -8:00 PM.



## ***The Power of Synergy:***

### ***Where Mindfulness Meets Compassion***

Imagine embracing thoughts and emotions with curiosity instead of judgment, fostering boundless kindness within and with others. This course merges Mindfulness and Compassion, fostering emotional equilibrium amid adversity.

The course is relevant to all individuals but may be particularly useful to people who are struggling with life challenges. From parents searching for equilibrium while raising children in difficult times to individuals struggling to find their identity and fit into the world to spiritual seekers looking for more peace and balance in their everyday lives. This course promises practices that can help you on your journey.

Visit <https://tinyurl.com/MSCuucc> to register for this Mindfulness Self-Compassion Course with Eric. Zoom Meeting ID: 917 2968 8203.



# FROM THE MINISTER



As Rev. Gy continues to recover from surgery they will take a break from their monthly column and give us an opportunity to hear perspectives from other ministers. This month's reflection is an excerpt from [a sermon](#) given by **Rev. Peter Friedrichs** at the UU Church of Delaware County in Media, Pennsylvania in 2022:

*"Roots hold me close; Wings set me free."* Each week we sing these words in our beloved hymn *"Spirit of Life."* I've been thinking a lot lately about what these words mean. They certainly evoke powerful images. The roots of a great old tree,

plunging deep into the soil. Roots, whose job it is to absorb nutrients from their surroundings. Roots that connect us to what is and what has been. Roots that provide us with a source of strength and stability. Wings that launch and lift us. Wings that draw us upward and offer us a wider view. Wings, those fragile appendages that can be so easily broken. Wings, that pull us out and beyond the known. Wings, tools for exploration, a source of freedom.

Through these words we proclaim that the Spirit of Life both holds us and sets us free. We proclaim that ours is a faith that simultaneously grounds us and releases us. That as Unitarian Universalists we hold onto tradition while at the same time we allow and encourage our faith and ourselves to grow, evolve and transform. That, my friends, is all a tall order. Who and how do we decide which traditions to hold onto, which to adapt and which to discard? How do we keep our proverbial feet planted on the ground while we're seeking to soar? What does it mean to be a *"living tradition,"* as we often call Unitarian Universalism, and who breathes life into our tradition? How, where, and when does this faith of ours get renewed, and why?

First, a very brief bit of history. Most of us know that Unitarianism and Universalism both grew out of Christian traditions. If we view our faith as a tree, you'll see our Christian roots run deep. The Bible, although interpreted differently than Catholic and most main line Protestant denominations, was at one time our holy scripture. If we hold onto this tree imagery, the first major branch of the tree came with the Transcendentalist movement, when our Unitarian forebears claimed that we can find God in places other than Scripture and that we can have an unmediated experience of the Divine outside of church. The next major branching came with the Humanist movement of the early and mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century, which was embraced by many if not most Unitarians. *"Faith without God"* and an unbridled belief in our human potential became the dominant theology in our living tradition, and that dominance continued right up through the end of the last Century. Then the *"spiritual but not religious"* movement emerged, and the UU pendulum of belief began to swing back toward center. We began to acknowledge that our faith needs to respond to the whole person, both the head and the heart. At the most recent turn of the century we (at first tentatively, but then less apologetically) we reintroduced religious language – a language of reverence – into our congregational vernacular, and we saw a return to religious ritual and practice that had once been discarded as anti-intellectual. Throughout all this time, both before and after the merger of Unitarians and Universalists in the early 1960's, a deeply rooted commitment to social justice held us fast to the ground and to each other.

As we tentatively and hopefully emerge from the Pandemic, we are faced with both the opportunity and the challenge to critically examine the roots we want to nurture and those we would be better off severing. Of stretching our wings to see where they might take us. Of determining how we can and should renew this faith that has renewed us for so long. Right now, we need to be asking ourselves these foundational questions: Who do we seek to serve, and how do we best serve them?

# LEADERSHIP



The Board of Trustees met on August 2. Here are some of the things they accomplished.

- Elected Steve Tasko as President, Eric Nelson as Vice-President, and Pat Timm as Secretary.

- Made plans for a Board Retreat in late September

- Discussed how to best inform the congregation about

the changes to Article II of the UUA By-Laws that will be voted on at General Assembly in June 2024.

- Gave tentative approval for UUC and Open House Theatre Company to collaborate to offer a Theatre Camp for Kids at UUC this summer.
- Made plans to discuss a name change for UUC at the September Program Council Meeting

Click [HERE](#) to access the minutes from the meeting. The next board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, **September 6** at **6:30 PM** via Zoom. 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](#).



## AACORN

### September Generosity Giving—AACORN

Our Generosity Sunday recipient for September is AACORN (Adult Agricultural Community Options for Residential Needs). In 2011, parents of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) dreamed of appropriate housing, meaningful work, and therapeutic activities for adults with ASD in Southwest Michigan. Driven by the need to serve adults no longer supported by school systems, the group formed AACORN Farm, Inc., now known simply as AACORN.

If it is yours to do, there are several ways to give to our special collection for AACORN. You can place a check made out to UUC with Generosity Sunday the memo in the offering basket anytime in September. You can also mail your check to our building. If you prefer to use a debit or credit card, [give online](#) using the church website or the Vanco app on your phone. Be sure to choose Generosity Sunday in the menu. If you prefer to give cash, we will be donating all cash and loose change in the offering plate on September 17 to the organization.

Also on September 17, we will be joined by founding AACORN parent and current president of their Board, **Cindy Semark**, about the opportunities AACORN provides people with ASD. Cindy will bring some of the goat milk soap made on the farm as well as copies of her book, *They All Grow Up: Parenting Adult Children with Special Needs*. These will be available for purchase for those who might be interested.

# 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 the **second Sunday of each month** at around **11:20 AM**. You can participate in Program Council in person or via Zoom.

We had lots to **CELEBRATE** at our August meeting: Our July Summer Sunday Forum series was a great success! Thank you to **Rev. Harold Beu** for organizing and presenting opportunities for people to gather and discuss different topics. Harold also presented an excellent special program on Hiroshima Remembrance Day. We had a very productive church clean-up day in mid-July. Thank you, **Regena and Eric Nelson, Ron and Nancy Crowell, Mary Roscoe, Joel Folkert, Stephanie Grathwol, Miriam**, and her niece **Fiona** for working so hard to keep UUCC looking good. A compost bin was installed and the back of the church and people are using it! Thank you, **Regena and Eric Nelson, Freya Lake, and Pat Fuehr** for making that happen. Lots of lovely social activities took place over the summer including a wonderful Chat and Chill at **Kathy Hays's** house. We also received recognition from the UUA for completing our 22/23 **Welcoming Congregation Certification** and making sure that LGBTQ+ people feel welcomed and supported by our church community. Together we can do amazing things!

During our August meeting, we also made plans for our 2023/2024 **GENEROSITY GIVING**. Thank you to everyone who nominated organizations and the 30 members and friends who cast ballots. The following organizations were chosen to be recipients of a special collection:

September— [AACORN Farms](#) (Point person—Michael Graham)

December— [Chuck and Ellen Howard Fund](#) (Point Person—Miriam)

April— [Community Homeworks](#) (Point People—Ron and Nancy Crowell)

June— [American Indian College Fund](#). (Point Person—NEEDED)

Are you for ways to become more involved and to help support this community? We've got lots of **OPPORTUNITIES** for YOU!

- UUCC will host a table at the **Suicide Prevention Walk** from 9 AM-1 PM in Bronson Park on September 23. Contact Kathy Hays ([hays.kathy16@gmail.com](mailto:hays.kathy16@gmail.com)) if you can take a shift.
- We are hoping to restart **Sunday Potlucks** on a quarterly basis. Contact Nancy Calme ([nancy.calme@gmail.com](mailto:nancy.calme@gmail.com)) if you are interested in working to get these organized.
- We need volunteers in the **Religious Exploration Program for Kids**. Talk to Miriam ([uucommunity@gmail.com](mailto:uucommunity@gmail.com)) if you are interested in volunteering.
- We need hosts to monitor the live-stream on **Facebook** on Sunday morning. This is an easy, once-a-month commitment. Training is provided. Contact Miriam to get started.
- We need people to work the **Sound Desk** on Sunday morning. Training is provided for this very important job. Talk to Steve Tasko ([stevetasko@gmail.com](mailto:stevetasko@gmail.com)) if you can help.
- **Coffee Hour Hosts** are needed! Sign up sheets are on the snack table on Sunday morning.

Our next Program Council meeting is on Sunday, **September 10** at around **11:20 AM**, in person or via Zoom. Please plan to attend and help keep UUCC's programs going strong. (More on [page 7](#))

# EXPLORING OUR IDENTITY

(Continued from [page 6](#)) Childcare will be provided. On the **AGENDA** for our next meeting:

- A potential name change for our community (see below for more info)
- Updating the Church Directory
- The 2023 Service Auction
- Planning our Welcoming Congregation Adult Enrichment Programs

The Youth Program will provide a light lunch of soup and bread (vegetarian options available) before the September Program Council meeting. Donations will be gratefully accepted.

If you have any questions, or items to add to the agenda, please send them to Eric Nelson ([ericvnelson1@gmail.com](mailto:ericvnelson1@gmail.com)) by Friday, **September 8**.

## **An Update from the Growth Team: Exploring a New Name for UUC:**

In January of 2023, the UUC Board discussed the congregation's interest in changing our organizational name. This idea emerged from discussions related to our year-long Appreciative Inquiry Process.

The founders of our Congregation created our current name almost 30 years ago, with the belief the name would last a few years before being updated. So the time has come to revisit our name to see if it still reflects our Values and Identity.

### ***History of our name change discussions to date include:***

- January 2023: The Board discussed congregations interest in a name change at the January 2023 Board meeting.
- February 2023: A Civil Conversations Zoom meeting was dedicated to discussing the pros and cons of name change. For some the word church was important given our Christian roots and how the word conveys a religious/spiritual focus and a physical building, for many the word church did not accurately convey the diversity of beliefs of our congregation. There was general support to continue our exploration of a name change.
- April 2023: A Congregational discussion was held following Sunday Service. While we did not reach consensus on dropping church from our name, about 90% of those attending were open to the idea. Several people were strongly opposed to dropping church since they felt it would do little to attract new members.
- May 2023: The Growth/Marketing Team took up the question of a name change and identified several name options.

### ***Next steps identified by the Board:***

- September 10: At the September Program Council the Growth Team will present a roster of alternate names, ask for feedback, and select the 3 or 4 most liked names.
- If there is general agreement around selecting a new name we will schedule a congregation vote sometime in the coming months. The earliest possible date would be November 2023.

### ***Name suggestions from the Growth Team:***

The Growth Team, through discussions and informal polling, has come up with five core names for the congregation to consider. They are:

**1) Unitarian Universalist   2) Tree of Life   3) United by Love   4) Beacon of Hope   5) Heartland**

Each of these core names has several possible iterations. Click [HERE](#) to see the full list of ideas.

If you have questions or concerns regarding this process prior to the September 10 Program Council, please contact Darby Fetzer or Eric Nelson.

# CARING COMMUNITY



## AUGUST CARING COMMUNITY NEWS

*By all these lovely tokens, September days are here.  
With summer's best of weather and autumn's best of cheer.*

-Helen Hunt Jackson

### **Joys, Concerns, and Member News:**

Congratulations to **Ron and Nancy Crowell** who welcomed their first great-grandchild **Oakley** to the world in August and **Marsha Laya** who is expecting another great-grandchild in February. Congratulations as well to **Rev Gy and Patti Ludwig-McCartney** who are celebrating their 7th wedding anniversary on Sept 17.

Our hearts are with **Jeanine Willacker** as she mourns the loss of a family member and with the **Nelson Family** as they mourn the loss of Regena's mother **Arabella Fails**. Arabella's unconditional love and daily prayers gave Regena the courage and confidence to be true to her calling as an educator, social activist, and mother. The Nelsons are grateful for every moment that they had with her and will miss her very much.

Marsha Laya shares that **Lee Smittendorf's** latest visit with the oncologist was very hopeful and encouraging. Lee and Marsha send their thanks for all the letters, notes, horse articles, cards, stories, books, calls, and the many messages of concern and support. This was a tough summer. It was very helpful for them to know they had all of you backing them up.

**Michael Graham** was proud to be able to see his great-nephew off to basic training last week. We wish him well as he begins his military service.

**Kevin and Tami Brozovich** welcomed a new daughter-in-law, **Liz**, to the family when their oldest son **Alex** got married on August 19. Congratulations to the newlyweds!

### **Birthdays:**

Let us wish a happy birthday to our September babies, **Herb Gross** and **Julie Keleman**!

### **Remembering Friend:**

In September of 2012, we lost **Alice Foote**, a founding member of UUC. Alice was a bundle of energy and put her whole heart into making the church beautiful and welcoming. The small evergreen in the front corner of the church building is dedicated to Alice and her husband **Lin** for their service to UUC. Alice would have been 94 this year.

### **Welcome Visitors:**

We have enjoyed visits from **Daniel and Katie Isbell**, **Debrin and Nick Wise**, **Karen Hayter**, **Beverly Comins**, **Sofi Hudson**, **Emily Smith**, **Charlotte Hubbard**, and **Becky Zegerius** recently. We are so glad you joined us! Please stop by and join 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 UUC office: 269-324-7262 or [uucommunity@gmail.com](mailto:uucommunity@gmail.com).



# SERVICE AUCTION



## Save the date for the 2023 Service Auction on October 21 at 5:00 PM

Please join us on Zoom or in person at UCC and bring friends. Childcare will be provided

Do you like homemade pie, road trips, parties, special dinners, weekly fresh vegetable boxes, or movies? Or would you like someone to teach you a new hobby or help you with chores? These are just a few of the offerings from previous service auctions. And any of them (or similar) can be yours for the highest bid at the Service Auction. We will also accept any unwanted high-quality, useful items for the Silent Auction. Your own offerings are needed, of course, to make this happen, so please sign up for what you will donate to the auction and RSVP at this [link](https://forms.gle/v47aCJP1dotAco4z5) by October 10. <https://forms.gle/v47aCJP1dotAco4z5>

We will gather at 5 PM to enjoy soup (a vegetarian option will be available), homemade bread, desserts, and beverages for a suggested donation of \$10 per adult. Between 5 and 6 PM, you can also peruse the silent auction tables which will be laden with jewelry, books, decor items, and the like. Each item will have a suggested starting bid. You write your bids on the sheets for items you want and keep checking to see if someone has outbid you. At the end of the evening, the highest bidder takes each item home.

At 6 PM, comes the main event. Rev. Gy will begin auctioning the special events and services. Lucky buyers will go home with high expectations for the events and services they'll enjoy throughout the year.

After the auction, you will be emailed the total amount for the items you purchased. You can pay by mailing a check to the church or using a credit card through the donate button on UCC website or the Vanco app.

Questions? Talk to any member of the Stewardship Committee:  
Joe Calme, Ron Crowell, Marsha Laya, or Chair Regena Nelson.



# RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION

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

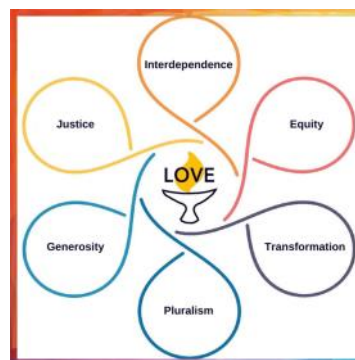
Each September in our UU Exploration Program we spend time creating covenant. Our covenant is a solemn agreement or a sacred promise we make to each other about how we will treat each other and how we act as a group. Unitarian Universalism is sometimes called a covenantal faith because, in the absence of shared creed or dogma, it is our commitment to our shared values and our community that binds us together.



The roots of covenant run deep in our faith tradition. It is part of Hebrew and Christian teachings that are foundational to Unitarian Universalism. Our Puritan forbears who formed some of the first Christian churches in America chose covenant as a way to organize themselves instead of the hierarchical system they left behind in Europe.

One of these first covenants was written by New England Puritans in 1648 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In The American Creed, Forrest Church paraphrases the Puritans' essential covenant as this:

*We pledge to walk together  
In the ways of truth and affection,  
As best we know them now  
Or may learn them in the days to come,  
That we and our children may be fulfilled  
And that we may speak to the world  
In words and actions  
Of peace and goodwill.*



The white, male, New England Puritans of the 17th century did not govern themselves democratically according to today's standards and they did not welcome a wide range of theological beliefs by any stretch of the imagination. They did, however, lay the basis for the values of congregational polity and theological diversity that continue to ground our UU faith communities today.

When our kids write covenants the end result isn't quite as poetic as the Cambridge Platform but they do never fail to articulate core values Unitarian Universalist values such as kindness, fairness, and equity. I always look forward to this time of year to see what they come up with.

In other news, will kick off our programming for kids on September 17. In consultation with some of the kids, we have decided to focus our explorations this year on Environmental Justice. Using curriculum from the [UU Ministry from Earth](#), we look forward to connecting with Nature and learning skills that will help us be advocates and allies in the fight against Climate Change. May it be so!

DATE	TOPIC	VOLUNTEERS
Sept 3	Free Play	Isaac Epskamp-Hunt
Sept 10	Multi-generational Service	N/A
Sept 17	Lessons from Trees/Creating Covenant	Mary Roscoe
September 24	Connecting with Nature	Kathy Hays

# LEARNING AND GROWTH



## Thoughtful Thursday

We have an exciting lineup of guests for our once-a-month **Thoughtful Thursday Speakers Series**. Each of these events will give you an opportunity to listen to and dialog with people navigating spiritual, mental, or physical growth and change in their work and their lives. Please plan to join us on Zoom at 7 PM for these unique opportunities to learn and grow.



### September 7: Internal Family Systems with Mary Beth Thomas

Mary Beth, a certified facilitator of the Trauma Informed Mind Body Program, Level 1 trained Internal Family Systems (IFS) Facilitator, and Yoga instructor will talk about the transformative power of IFS especially as it relates to personal relationships. Click [HERE](#) to register for the conversation with Mary Beth. Meeting ID 973 5065 1017



### October 19: Engaged Spirituality with Dr. Donald Rothberg

A Buddhist practitioner for over 25 years, Dr. Rothberg is one of the nation's foremost leaders in socially engaged spirituality. He will help us explore engaged spirituality through a Buddhist lens. Click [HERE](#) to register for the conversation with Dr. Rothberg. Meeting ID 951 4375 5249



### November 9: A Conversation with Tam Morgan

The President of the [Foundation for Inner Peace](#) (the publisher for the Course in Miracles), **Tam Morgan**, is confirmed for our November Thoughtful Thursday. More information about this conversation will be coming soon! Click [HERE](#) to register for the conversation with Tam. Meeting ID 996 7998 5253

*If you cannot attend any of these Thoughtful Thursdays in real time, you can sign up to receive a recording of the event by filling out the Zoom registration form.*



SAT. SEPTEMBER 23

**SUICIDE PREVENTION WALK**  
*10th Anniversary Celebration*

Help UCC support suicide prevention and mental health awareness at the 10th Annual **Suicide Prevention Walk** Resource Fair on **September 23** from 9 AM—1 PM in Bronson Park. Contact [Kathy Hays](#) if you would like to help staff our table. Thanks!

# SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

## Building Beloved Community One Conversation at a Time



The UCC Civil Conversations Group will begin meeting again in September! Civil Conversations is a dynamic gathering where we glean a deeper understanding of today's hotly contested topics and engage our individual perspectives in discussion as we strive to build the Beloved Community, one conversation at a time.

The group will meet over Zoom once a month, usually on a Thursday. The September meeting will be on **Thursday, September 28 at 7:00 PM** via Zoom. During this meeting, the group will review what it has learned so far about engaging in conversations with people who hold differing world views, practice some of the strategies that can help build better understanding between people who disagree, and brainstorm possible discussion topics for future meetings. Newcomers are always welcome to join this gathering and please feel free to invite friends with varying perspectives to this gathering.

Click [HERE](#) to be part of the conversation. Meeting ID: 913 7914 4167 Passcode: 601656  
If you have any questions contact Darby (269-569-5557 or [darbylynnfetzer@gmail.com](mailto:darbylynnfetzer@gmail.com)).

## Finding Joy Through a Smaller Environmental Foot Print



On the third Monday of the most months, the Sustainability Group meets to reflect on their personal sustainability journeys, to share their successes and failures, and to explore ideas for promoting sustainable living at UCC and in the wider community.

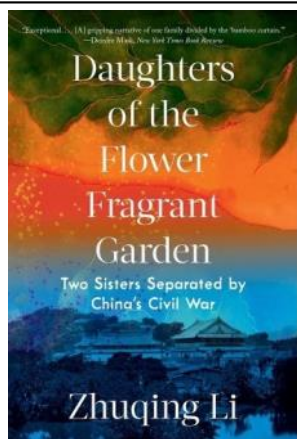
The group's regular meetings will start up again on Monday, **September 18 at 7 PM** via Zoom. During the meeting, they will be sharing some individual goals and brainstorming some group plans for the new church year. If you have been thinking about joining the Sustainability Group, now is a good time! Click [HERE](#) to join. Zoom Meeting ID: 960 9812 1445 Passcode: 990641

Group members recently shared the following opportunities and resources to help each other live more gently on the earth:

- The United States Botanic Garden regularly provides interesting online programs about sustainability. They are hosting a program on **September 1** at 12 PM on ***Building Community and Climate Resilience through Community Forest Gardens***. Visit [usbg.gov](https://usbg.gov) to learn more and to register for online events.
- The next [Kalamazoo Climate Crisis Coalition's Fridays for the Future](#) is on **September 8** at noon. Derek Nofz will give an update on Consumers Energy's plans for renewable energy, transmission line upgrades, and other issues regarding their future plans. Click [HERE](#) to join the meeting.
- Our environmental justice partners at Hope for Creation will hold their 3rd Annual ***Harvest of Unity*** at the 1st Congregation Church in Kalamazoo on **September 23** from 5-7 PM. This year's event will be hosted by their Purposefully Plant-Based Team and will feature a cooking demonstration for vegan cheese sauce and a plant-based potato bar! Be sure to RSVP at [hopeforcreation.net](https://hopeforcreation.net).
- Mark your calendars for the ***People's Plant-Based Party***, hosted by Peoples Food Coop and Vegan Kalamazoo, Sunday, **October 8**, 12 PM to 4 PM, at the Kalamazoo Farmers Market on Bank Street.



# CONNECTION



## Women's Book Group

**September 8**

**1:00 PM**

***Daughters of the Flower Fragrant Garden***

by Zhuqing Li

Discussion Leader:  
Beverly Folz

From Goodreads:

*Jun and Hong were scions of a once great southern Chinese family. Each other's best friend, they grew up in the 1930s during the final days of Old China before the tumult of the twentieth century brought political revolution, violence, and a fractured national identity. By a quirk of timing, at the end of the Chinese Civil War, Jun ended up on an island under Nationalist control, and then settled in Taiwan, married a Nationalist general, and lived among fellow exiles at odds with everything the new Communist regime stood for on the mainland. Hong found herself an ocean away on the mainland, forced to publicly disavow both her own family background and her sister's decision to abandon the party. A doctor by training, to overcome the suspicion created by her family circumstances, Hong endured two waves of "re-education" and internal exile, forced to work in some of the most desperately poor, remote areas of the country. Ambitious, determined, and resourceful, both women faced morally fraught decisions as they forged careers and families in the midst of political and social upheaval. Jun established one of U.S.-allied Taiwan's most important trading companies. Hong became one of the most celebrated doctors in China. Niece to both sisters, Zhuqing Li tells her aunts' story for the first time, honoring her family's history with sympathy and grace.*

If you have any questions about Women's Book Group, please contact Stephanie Grathwol.

Click [HERE](#) for the link.

Meeting ID: 996 0783 5644 Passcode: 360981

## Qigong Group

You are invited to join our weekly Qigong sessions, every Tuesday and Saturday morning at 9:00 AM!

5 Reasons to try Qigong at UUC

- Qigong is a low-impact exercise that doesn't require fancy equipment or special clothes.
- Qigong helps to loosen your muscles and relax your body.
- Qigong provides an opportunity for intentional deep breathing that clears your mind.
- Our sessions are on Zoom so you can try it in the privacy of your own home with your camera off.
- Our Qigong 'regulars' are a great bunch of people who will welcome YOU warmly.

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

Meeting ID: 697 338 090 Passcode: 138550

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

Meeting ID: 977 5286 6838 Passcode: 383810

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



## 3rd Saturday Breakfast Group

The UUC Breakfast Group will meet for breakfast on **Saturday, September 16** at **9:00 AM** at Garcia's Mexican Kitchen conveniently located on Shaver Road, right next door to UUC.

The 3rd Saturday Breakfast Group is a wonderful opportunity for conversation and connection and is open to all UUC members and friends.



Please RSVP to Ken VanEseltine ([vaneseltinekl@sbcglobal.net](mailto:vaneseltinekl@sbcglobal.net)) if you plan to attend

# CELEBRATE



Unitarian Universalist Community Church

## ***Equinox Bonfire***

Friday  
September

**22**

6:00 PM

Hosted by  
Kathy Hays

For directions to Kathy's house:  
269.598.6132  
[hays.kathy16@gmail.com](mailto:hays.kathy16@gmail.com)

Weenies and  
S'mores provided.

Bring your own  
preferred beverage.



Please bring a reading honoring the arrival of fall, the history of bonfires, equinox, a fall tradition, a ghost story, a joke, or any other bits of wisdom we should know, you will have a chance to share as we become mesmerized by the crackling fire.

# 8TH PRINCIPLE

BUILD a  
diverse  
BELOVED  
COMMUNITY

## Putting Our 8th UU Principle into Action

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

As we think about “Nurturing Our Roots” this month, consider this perspective from Dr. Glen Thomas Rideout, Director of Worship Arts Ministries at First Universalist Church of Minneapolis and remember the voices and experiences that have been left out of our understanding of history and tradition. The following was shared in [Braver/Wiser](#) in September 2022.

*If you don't seek it, you won't see it...I'ma build my own foundation...You won't break my soul.*

- Beyoncé Giselle Knowles-Carter

When it was his turn to present his history project to our 7th grade class, he began with delight, flashing a large posterboard and permanent-marker family tree. He'd been able to trace his ancestors back to the 1500s!

I wondered how he managed to discover so much and so many. I'd tried something like that a year before. I asked every adult in my family. Stayed in the local library for so long, they gave me a job at the desk! I combed the Internet looking for something of my deeper heritage, so that I could imagine myself.

He was talking about his German ancestors. I remember feeling confusion. I had no idea where he was getting this information about his great-great-grandparents. I looked around me, and none of the other Black kids in the classroom seemed to have a clue either. We don't have those stories. Ultimately, I realized that my white classmate had access to time that I didn't have: access to stories and connections that I could never have.

Like most Black people, I rise on the shoulders of ancestors whose names I can not know. Our ability to move through our own past is encumbered, cut off at the point where we as human beings are sold like cargo: the point of erasure.

In order to shackle people to ships, you have to untether them from their life stories and their heritage; their bloodlines and their land and their homes. You do all of this untethering, and for the rest of the generations of that person—for the rest of the time—there will be no knowing of their stories.

If, from the beginning of racism and this human trafficking, the point was to build a country with people imprisoned and kept in their economic states, then the only way for America—for all of her people—to get any sort of free together is to act as if these stolen stories truly exist; to replace habits that encumber the movement and liberation of our kindred; to remember even the lives for which we know no names.

We show our children now the truths of yesterday and the possibility of tomorrow. It's this deeper connection with the greater living story that brings a chance of wellness and repair for all life.





# OPPORTUNITIES



**Come Celebrate these Awesome Leaders at the ISAAC Walk, Run, Roll on September 9 in Spring Valley Park!**

*Servant Leader of the Year Award:*

Coach Dick Shilts

*Woman of Community Impact Award:*

Cordelia Greer

*Leader of Equity Award:*

Maggie Adams

*Lifetime Achievement Award:*

Deacon Joe Schmitt

*Beloved Community Work Award:*

Black & Brown on the Ground Collective  
Against Gun Violence

*ISAAC Clergy of the Year Award:*

Rev. Rachel Lonberg

*ISAAC Leader of the Year:*

Kerria Randolph

After the walk/run/roll there will be community fellowship with food, music, singing, drumming and performances from social justice, cultural and faith communities. There will also be vendors to promote connections. This is an event for all ages and all community members.

## Afternoon with the Arts:

**An Art Reception Featuring Artist Patrick Thomas and the Paw Paw Community Chorus**

Celebrate our local art and culture scene at the Portage District Library on September 10 at 2 PM by attending a special art reception and concert featuring artist Patrick Thomas and the Paw Paw Community Chorus. UUCC member Judy Halseth is a member!

The afternoon will begin with a short concert of choral melodies with the Paw Paw Community Chorus. Following the concert, guest artist Patrick Thomas will give a retrospective presentation about the art of pastel painting. Attendees are invited to enjoy refreshments, a special meet and greet with the artist, and an artist-guided gallery tour of the exhibit "Fleeting Moments: A Retrospective Exhibition of Pastel Paintings" to conclude the afternoon. No registration or tickets are required.



**New on the Art Wall in September!** Thank you to the generosity of Ron and Nancy Crowell, we are delighted to present **Tree Views**, a selection of tree-themed artwork from their personal collection.

The pieces were created by several different artists in a variety of mediums and collected by Ron and Nancy over the course of many years. They are sure to bring us inspiration as we embark on a year of *Exploring the Tree of Life*. Be sure to check out the exhibit the next time you visit UUCC!





# SEPTEMBER



DAY	DATE	EVENT	TIME
Friday	September 1	Life Line Health Screening	9 AM-4 PM
Saturday	September 2	Qigong	9:00 AM
Sunday	September 3	What Holds Us Together with Rev. Gy After Service Social Time	10:00 AM 11:00 AM
Monday	September 4	LABOR DAY	All Day
Tuesday	September 5	Qigong Newcomers Book Group	9:00 AM 5:30 PM
Wednesday	September 6	Board of Trustees Meeting	6:30 PM
Thursday	September 7	Stewardship Committee Meeting Thoughtful Thursday with Mary Beth Thomas	1:00 PM 7:00 PM
Friday	September 8	Women's Book Group	1:00 PM
Saturday	September 9	Qigong ISAAC Walk, Run, Roll	9:00 AM 1:30—4:30 PM
Sunday	September 10	Homecoming with Rev. Gy After Service Social Time/Souper Sunday Program Council Meeting	10:00 AM 11:00 AM 11:20 AM
Monday	September 11	Mindfulness Self-Compassion Course with Eric Nelson	7:00 PM
Tuesday	September 12	Qigong Newcomers Book Group	9:00 AM 5:30 PM
Wednesday	September 13	Sunday Services Committee Meeting	5:30 PM
Saturday	September 16	Qigong 3rd Saturday Breakfast Group	9:00 AM 9:00 AM
Sunday	September 17	Black Lives Matter with Ebony Peace; UU Exploration for Kids After-Service Social Time	10:00 AM 11:00 AM
Monday	September 18	Sustainability Group	7:00 PM
Tuesday	September 19	Qigong Newcomers Book Group	9:00 AM 5:30 PM
Wednesday	September 20	Growth Team Meeting NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	10:00 AM 12:00 PM
Friday	September 22	Autumnal Equinox Bonfire	5:00 PM
Saturday	September 23	Qigong Suicide Prevention Walk	9:00 AM 9 AM-1 PM
Sunday	September 24	Exploring the Roots of our Faith with UUCM Members and Friends UU Exploration for Kids After-Service Social Time	10:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:00 AM
Monday	September 25	Mindfulness Self Compassion Course with Eric Nelson	7:00 PM
Tuesday	September 26	Qigong Newcomers Book Group	9:00 AM 5:30 PM
Thursday	September 28	Civil Conversations Group	7:00 PM
Saturday	September 30	Qigong	9:00 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

## 2023-2024 Board of Trustees

Steve Tasko

Eric Nelson

Pat Timm

Michael Graham

Marsha Laya

**The next Newsletter Deadline is  
Wednesday, September 20 at NOON**

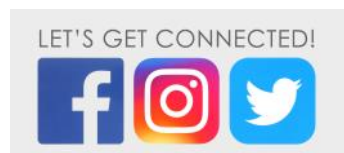
Please send submissions to:

**[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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