



CommUnity Matters

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest Michigan

January 2024

JANUARY SUNDAY SERVICES

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

January 7: *Letter to Self* with Rev. Gy

Rev. Gy will guide us through the spiritual practice of writing a letter to our future selves.

Zoom Meeting ID: 947 9574 6109 Click [HERE](#) to register.

January 14: *Peace Through Understanding* with Robert Weir

Why? Oh, why are things this way? Why am I feeling this way? Why? Why? Why?

Why? This is the worrisome question we ask when we are bewildered, when things don't go as planned, or when people don't act as we expect them to. This is the question that signals we are not at peace. But the question, "Why?" can also help us regain our composure, our balance, our equilibrium, our understanding, our peace.

Zoom Meeting ID: 947 9574 6109 Click [HERE](#) to register.

January 21: *The Tree of Contemplative Practice* with Rev. Larry Farris

The Christian scriptures feature trees at their beginning and at their end (Genesis 2.8-9,15-17, 3.1-7 and Revelation 22.1-2), and both are compelling symbols of life and its purposes. Our guest speaker Larry Farris will help us ponder what these trees call us towards in our life journeys.

Zoom Meeting ID: 966 0873 6946 Click [HERE](#) to register.

January 28: *Unchain Yourself* with Rev. Gy

We all have a past, a collection of experiences, moments, and regrets that have shaped who we are today. Our past and the mistakes we have made are an integral part of our journey, but they should not define us. Join Rev. Gy to learn more about letting go.

Zoom Meeting ID: 992 4170 0219 Click [HERE](#) to register.



Spiritual Theme for January PRODUCING NEW SAP

During the course of this church year, we are taking inspiration for our spiritual explorations from the Tree of Life. Since we began in August, we have prepared the soil; nurtured our roots; contemplated senescence; encouraged photosynthesis; and explored our heartwood. As we turn the page on a new calendar year, we will spend the next month preparing for new sap.

Sap inside a tree is like blood in the human body. It flows through the tree delivering water, sugars, and nutrients. Sap is created in the warm summer months when the sun is at its peak and photosynthesis is in full swing. All winter long, the sap is stored deep within the tree, waiting for the right conditions for new growth to occur.

Like the trees, we too have been gathering resources and are waiting for what will come next. We have been storing knowledge and wisdom to help us weather the inevitable changes that time will bring and to bring the spiritual growth we hope to achieve.

Questions to ponder in this month of New Beginnings:

What lessons have we learned in the past year and which new ones now call us forward?

How can we center beauty and goodness and love in all that's ahead?

GUESTS IN THE PULPIT

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



Robert M. Weir works and plays with words. After working in radio, television, and the school yearbook business, the discovery of a brain tumor caused him to reassess his life. It reminded him of his mortality and motivated him to hone his creative writing skills and reorient his career. Since the 1990s, “Have Laptop, Will Travel” has been the theme of his life. He has enjoyed success as the author of many magazine articles, travel blogs, and books including *Peace, Justice, Care of Earth*, the biography of John McConnell, founder of the original Earth Day and

Brain Tumor, a medical memoir about his experiences with the benign meningioma. Bob also is a writers’ coach, an editor, and a public speaker who gives presentations about people, peace-making, social justice issues, environmentalism, and his many travel adventures.

The **Rev. Larry Farris** is a pastor, preacher, teacher (theology, biblical interpretation, preaching, world religions, and composition), and spiritual director-pastoral coach. He is the author of *Dynamics of Small Town Ministry*, *Ten Commandments for Pastors New to a Congregation*, and *Ten Commandments for Pastors Leaving a Congregation* as well as numerous articles. Now retired, he served Presbyterian churches in Maryland and Michigan. A voracious reader, Larry loves to garden, cook, travel, walk, cycle, canoe, grandfather, and sing. In addition to loving theater and film, he is moderately obsessed with the history and literature of the Great War. His wife Pat is a retired hospice nurse, an accomplished flutist and watercolorist, and serves on the board of the Haiti Nursing Foundation. Their son Jordan lives outside Chicago with his wife Joanna and their children, Alec and Demi. Daughter Rachel lives in Minneapolis with her husband Fernando and their daughter Luciana. Larry is a graduate of the University of Michigan and Princeton Theological Seminary.



Our January **Thoughtful Thursday** conversation on January 18 at 7 PM via Zoom will feature special guest **Emilee Petersmark**.

Emilee is a Grand Rapids-based artist and musician. Her visual art favors dark, spiritual elements that unique and haunting imagery. As a lyricist, she writes across a broad spectrum of themes, from local folktales, personal friendships and relationships, and queer representation, to the occasional politically motivated track. Making a living as a touring musician with her band **The Crane Wives**, Emilee takes inspiration from music and does much of her creating on the road. Emilee will talk to us about her creative process and how she stays true to herself as she pursues her ambitions as an artist.

To register for this Thoughtful Thursday: tinyurl.com/uucccranewives Can’t join us on January 18? Register anyway! A recording of the event will be made available to all registrants.

FROM THE MINISTER



From the Minister

[Rev. Gy Ludvig-McCartney](#)

Forever is composed of nows. - Emily Dickinson

I tend to take inventory at the end of each year. I look back on things I've done well and squirm at the areas where improvement is still needed. Then I usually turn my attention to my hopes and dreams.

I think many of us tend to do this right around this time of year. It's natural. There's a buzz of energy surrounding the surrender of an old year to a new one.

What humanity has done for perhaps as long as calendars existed is to set new hopes for the fresh year. Project fulfillment of dreams unto a distant day. That day would be happy. That day will have made all the sacrifices of immediate gratification worthwhile.

It is our precious gift (and curse!) that we can imagine and project. This gift separates us from all other creatures on this planet. One would think that this uniqueness of ours would contribute to tremendous happiness and a sense of fulfillment.

In fact, this couldn't be farther from the truth. We've been fooled to live for a tomorrow that no one has ever experienced, no one has ever touched, no one has ever lived. Not because it is hard to reach. But because it does not exist.

We only have this present moment granted to us. Yesterday and the previous moment are gone forever; tomorrow will never come. Life wants and needs to be lived here and now. Nothing else is possible.

So, when you tell yourself that you'll be happy once you lose those extra pounds, just save yourself the time and be happy now. When you tell yourself that you'll be happy when you pay off all your debt, get that job, go on that trip, beat that illness, marry that person, or for that matter – divorce that person, - save yourself the time and be happy now. Right now.

Be so present to this NOW that the choices you make and the words you speak can be so good and solid that will serve a future time well if it should ever come.

This is not easy to do, because of our conditioning and perhaps there is something about human nature that prefers to pretend that it can live in the past or the future. Well, we can't. I can't. You can't.

So, stop postponing happiness till that day. Be happy today, here and now. Regardless of years changing numbers, goals achieved or not yet. Just be content, be happy now, and do what needs to be done.

It feels right to me. It feels sane to me. It also feels possible. Here's to NOW!

CARING COMMUNITY



JANUARY CARING COMMUNITY NEWS

We spend January 1 st walking through our lives room by room, drawing up a list of work to be done, cracks to be patched. Maybe this year, to balance the list, we ought to walk through the rooms of our lives...not looking for flaws, but for potential.

-Ellen Goodman, American journalist and syndicated columnist

Joys, Concerns, and Member News:

Mary Roscoe moved into a new house at the end of December and is grateful for the help of family and friends who made it possible. Hooray for new beginnings!

Many UUCG folks were on the move recently visiting family and friends out of state. What a blessing it is to be able to be together on the holidays.

Our UUCG musicians, **Nancy Calme** and **David Senecal** enjoyed successful holiday concerts at the end of December, and the **UUCG Singers** did a wonderful job at the Winter Solstice service under the direction of our amazing Music Director, **Chris Petersmark**.

For the first time in five years, the sanctuary was filled with people on Christmas Eve to enjoy carols, readings, and candlelight. Many thanks to **Rev. Gy**, **Chris Petersmark**, **Regena Nelson**, **David Senecal**, and **Stephanie Grathwol** for presenting such a beautiful service for us all.

As a new school semester begins in January, we send our best wishes to all our UUCG students- **Declan** and **Theo Wojciak**, **Nick Tasko**, **Matthew Nelson**, **Amanda Nelson**, **David Brozovich**, **Chris Petersmark**, and **Isaac Epskamp-Hunt**. We are proud of YOU!

We also send **Rev. Gy** our best wishes for a safe and fulfilling journey as they travel to Hungary to visit family from January 8-24.

Birthdays:

January brings us birthdays to celebrate! **5-Dick Bott**, **7-Nancy Stob**, **7 – Pat Fuehr**, **17-Ron Crowell**, **17-Mary King**, **20-Amanda Nelson**, **22 – Hailey Poulsen**, **23-Judy Oliver**, **25-Betty Lee Ongley**, and **27- Kevin Brozovich**

Remembering Friends Who Have Passed On:

Long-timers at UUCG remember three special people who we have lost over the years.

A ray of sunshine who passed away in 2006 - **Susie Johnson**

An earnest member who gave his all for UUCG and died in 2015 – **Otto Byers**

A founding member who we lost only three years ago, in 2021 - **Elizabeth Fernandez**

Visitors:

A hearty UUCG welcome to our visitors - **Dawn Renner**, **Emily Smith**, **Ric Dickson**, **Virginia Jones**, **Kristi Harnishfeger**, **Charles Heidelberg**, **Lorrie Batsie**, **Michael Cranken**, **Doug and Jara Bottonly**, **Kristin D**, **Michael and Deepali**, and **Cody**. It was also good to see our dear friend **Katy Ettwein** in the Zoom room on Christmas Eve. We hope you all stop by and visit again.

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

LEADERSHIP



The Board of Trustees met on December 7. Here are a few of the things they accomplished:

- Provided feedback on a draft rental agreement for the Living Church of God congregation
- Made plans to survey the congregation about changing UUC's name
- Voted to support an amendment to the Article 2 revisions proposed by Kara Stebbins of UU Fellowship of Madison County, Kentucky

Click [HERE](#) to read the minutes from their December meeting.

The next regular Board meeting will take place via Zoom on **Wednesday, January 3 at 6:30 PM.**

Board meetings are open to anyone who would like to attend. A link to the Zoom meeting can be found on the [UU Community Church online calendar](#).



Leadership Training

Our friends at [Interfaith Strategies for Advocacy and Action in the Community](#) (ISAAC) are excited to welcome Rev. Catoya Roberts back to Kalamazoo in February for a **Culturally Competent Community Organizing Leadership Training**.

This will be ISAAC's first in-person leadership training with Rev. Catoya since 2020. The training will cover concepts and tools an effective leader needs to thrive. It will also give participants the opportunity to reflect on their present and future potential roles in the public arena and community to bring about systemic change.

Please help ISAAC schedule this workshop by filling out an interest survey: <https://forms.gle/S6RhNBeH41VrZth76>

Regional UU Assembly

The MidAmerica Region of the Unitarian Universalist Association is coming together - both online and at the First Unitarian Society of Madison, WI on **April 19 and 20** for a multi-platform Regional Assembly!

This Regional Assembly will feature a Keynote Conversation between the Rev. Sofía Betancourt, Ph.D., President of the Unitarian Universalist Association, and the Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia A. Thompson, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. There will be both in-person and online workshops and opportunities to connect with and develop relationships with UUs from across the entire Region.

So, please save the date and begin making your plans to attend the regional assembly onsite or online.



GENERAL ASSEMBLY

General Assembly (GA) is the annual meeting of our Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). Participants worship, witness, learn, connect, and make policy for the Association through the democratic process. **Anyone may attend.**



UUA GENERAL ASSEMBLY
VIRTUAL GA • JUNE 20 - 23, 2024

Love Unites, Stories Ignite

In a world filled with division and challenges, the theme for this year's General Assembly- ***Love Unites, Stories Ignite*** - is a powerful reminder of the core principles that unite us as Unitarian Universalists. It celebrates the profound impact of love as a binding force that transcends boundaries and fosters connections within our faith community and beyond.

Our faith has always been rooted in the power of storytelling, and this year we'll explore how our stories can ignite change, inspire compassion, and help us build a more just and equitable world. Through storytelling, we share our experiences, our dreams, our struggles, and our triumphs. It is through these stories that we can find common ground, deepening our understanding of one another and the world around us.

The **63rd General Assembly** of the UUA will take place 100% virtually between **Thursday, June 20,** and **Sunday, June 23, 2024.**



Full online registration includes access to GA 2024 in the Whova event app, as well as on-demand programming, featured speakers, and major worships. The registration portal is now open. Full registration is \$280 through February 29. Prices will go up in March.

Two delegates are needed to attend business meetings and represent UUCC at General Assembly. UUCC delegates will also cast a historic final vote on the [proposed revision to Article II of the UUA Bylaws](#). If you are interested in serving as a delegate, contact a UUCC Board Member or discuss the details with Miriam. Delegates may attend the General Assembly business meetings at no cost.

To learn more about GA visit uua.org/ga or talk to someone who has attended in the past—Eric Nelson, Marsha Laya, Rev. Gy, Judy Halseth, Kimberly Ridley, or Miriam.

PROGRAM COUNCIL



Program Council—Where TOGETHER—we Get Stuff Done!

Everyone - members, friends, visitors—is invited to help create programming at UU Community Church on second Sundays at around 11:20 AM. Bring your voice to our next meeting on **January 14**. We will meet following the service and you can participate either in person or on Zoom.

At our December meeting, we had much to **CELEBRATE!**

We enjoyed great November Sunday services from **Rev. Gy**, guest speaker **Rev. Greta Jo Siedohl**, and the Bread Communion Team of **Miriam, Nick, and Amanda**. We presented a very well-received Thoughtful Thursday with **Ben Brown** focused on sustainability and climate change. Three UCC folks **showed up for transgender kids and LGBTQIA+ families** at a Vicksburg School Board Meeting. We hosted a KNOW program about the **History of Gaza**. A big group of UCC folks attended the **Portage Community Thanksgiving Service** that featured Rev. Gy as a speaker. We collected a huge pile of **toys for refugee kids** with our Samaritas Giving Tree. And we hosted an additional **fourteen small group meetings and activities**. Together we can do amazing things!

We learned about many upcoming OPPORTUNITIES including:

- **Help keep our grounds looking good!** Contact Eric Nelson if you can help spread stones in the beds around the church.
- **Work at the Sound Desk on Sunday morning!** Contact Steve if you are interested in learning to be a technical host for our Sunday Services.
- **Invite your friends and family to our Winter Fundraiser!** Chase away the winter blues at our chili supper featuring musical guest Dana Scott. (See [page 8](#) for details)
- **Start the New Year with a FREE Mindfulness Retreat!** With Eric Nelson from 9:30 AM—2 PM on January 6. To register visit: <https://tinyurl.com/uccMindfulRetreat>
- **Take our Name Change Survey!** Help us make a decision about changing UCC's name. Please click [HERE](#) to fill out a short survey if you haven't done so already.
- **Volunteer with Open House Theatre Company!** Plans are underway at Open House for a May 2024 production featuring one-act plays by local playwrights. Contact Mary Roscoe (lizoflynn@gmail.com) if you are interested in helping behind the scenes.
- **Become a member of MUUSJN!** For as little as \$25 you can become a member of the [Michigan UU Social Justice Network](#) and help support UU social justice work at the state level. Visit [HERE](#) to make a payment by PayPal or credit card or write a check payable to MUUSJN and mail to Randy Block, Director 4220 Arlington Dr., Royal Oak, MI 48073

Please plan to join us at the next Program Council meeting on Sunday, January 14 at around 11:20 AM, in person or via Zoom, and help keep UCC's programs going strong. We will serve a light soup luncheon before the Program Council Meeting. All donations will help support youth programs at UCC.

If you have any questions about Program Council, or items to add to the agenda, contact Eric Nelson (ericvnelson1@gmail.com)

STEWARDSHIP



Baby, it's cold outside. Come warm up at the **UUC Winter Blues Fundraiser** on Saturday, **January 27** at **6 PM**. Join us for a delightful evening of good food, soul-warming chili, and live music by the talented **Dana Scott** a blues, folk, country, and soul singer and guitar player.

For just **\$10 per person** (kids and newcomers eat free), you'll enjoy a delicious chili supper (vegetarian options available) that will chase away the winter blues.

Please invite your friends and neighbors to a night of fantastic food and entertainment. If you did not pay for this event through the UUC Service auction, you can pay at the door.



2023 Contribution Statements

Contribution Statements will be emailed in January.

If you gave traceable payments on a pledge or other contributions to UUC, you will receive an emailed Contribution Statement in January 2024 from Kimberly Ridley. The Contribution Statement will show all your giving activity recorded in church records for the calendar year ended 12/31/23.

This statement is intended to support your tax records and claims of deductions for charitable giving to UUC. All receipts made via check, Vanco, or other recorded means for which you received no goods or services are listed.

As always, please review your record and let me know if you find any discrepancies which require correction (or if you do not receive the emailed statement by January 31).

Your contributions and donations are sincerely appreciated.

Thank you,

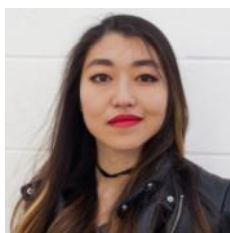
Kimberly Ridley, Assistant Treasurer

Email ridleyk@hotmail.com or (269) 569-3658

LEARNING AND GROWTH

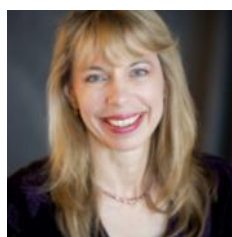


We have an exciting lineup of guests for our once-a-month Thoughtful Thursday Speakers Series. Each of these events will give you an opportunity to listen to and dialog with people navigating spiritual, mental, or physical growth and change in their work and their lives. Please plan to join us on Zoom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



January 18: Keeping It Real with Emilee Petersmark

Emilee Petersmark is a Grand Rapids-based artist and musician who favors dark, spiritual elements, creating unique and haunting imagery. Making a living as a touring musician with her band [The Crane Wives](#), Emilee takes inspiration from music and does much of her creating on the road. Emilee will join us to talk about the creative process and how she stays true to herself as she pursues her ambitions. Click [HERE](#) to register for this Zoom meeting.



February 22: The Freedom to Choose Project with Bonnie Paul Ph.D.

The Freedom to Choose Project, based in California, transforms the lives of individuals impacted by incarceration through compassionate experiential education that has been proven to reduce prison violence and recidivism. We are excited to host its co-founder Bonnie Paul at our February Thoughtful Thursday to learn more about the project and how it is transforming lives. Click [HERE](#) to register for this Zoom meeting

Successfully Creating New Habits and Kicking the Old Ones

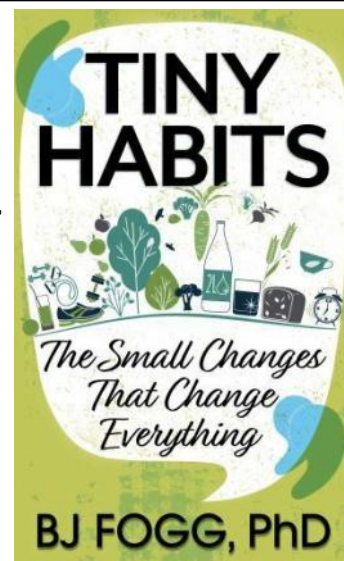
UUC member and Emotional Intelligence consultant Darby Fetzer will facilitate a one session workshop via Zoom on **Tuesday, January 30 at 7 PM.**

Based on Stanford behavioral scientist, BJ Fogg's book, *Tiny Habits: The Small Changes That Change Everything*, this workshop will educate participants on judgement-free, science-based methods of changing habits. This approach is far more effective than relying on motivation alone.

To register for the Zoom meeting: tinyurl.com/uucctinyhabits

Please feel free to invite your friends to this transformative program!

If you have any questions, contact Darby at darbylynnfetzer@gmail.com



SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Journey Within: A Retreat for Self-Discovery and Well-Being

Embarking on a new year often calls for a reset, a chance to realign our priorities and reconnect with our inner selves. Embark on a journey of personal transformation at our upcoming one-day workshop at UUCC scheduled for **Saturday, February 10**, from **9:00 AM to 2:00 PM**.



Led by personal transformation coach and Growth to Clarity owner, **Kathryn Ragains-Wilson**, with support from Mindfulness Trainer **Eric Nelson**, **Rev. Gy**, and certified yoga instructor and personal trainer **Josie Moorlag**, the workshop promises to be an inspirational and empowering day dedicated to unlocking the healing power of self-care.

Participants will embark on a holistic journey that encourages them to listen to their "wise self" and discover strategies for self-renewal in their daily lives. Here's what they can expect:

- Learn to integrate self-renewal strategies into daily life.
- Explore methods of getting out of your head and into your body.
- Tap into ideas for daily physical, emotional, and spiritual renewal.
- Create a personal vision board to manifest goals into your life.
- Experience meaningful connections with like-minded people.

The cost of the workshop, which includes a catered vegetarian lunch, is \$25.00 to cover material costs. Financial hardship should not keep anyone from participating. To request a scholarship, email uucommunity@gmail.com.

For those seeking a meaningful start to the year, the Journey Within workshop promises to be the transformative experience you've been searching for. Take a leap into self-care and let the healing power of this workshop set the tone for a year of personal growth and well-being.

Enrollment is limited so secure your spot early! Register at: <https://forms.gle/gTx9cBtEgiounpcT8>

If you are having trouble accessing the online registration form, you can also register by phone at 269-993-8758



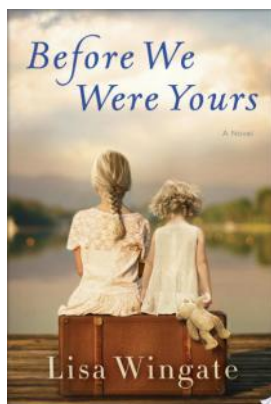
New Small Group Forming!

In 2024, Rev. Gy would like to begin a **new small group** at UUCC to explore either **philosophy, ethics, or theology**. The small group would meet at UUCC or via Zoom (or both) once a month for 90 minutes.

If this is something that you might be interested in, please click [HERE](#) to fill out an interest survey to help Rev. Gy plan content for the small group and to schedule a time to meet that is convenient for all participants.

If at least six people are interested in participating, we will schedule the first meeting for the group in February.

CONNECTION



Women's Book Group

Friday, January 12
1:00 PM via Zoom

January Selection:
Before We Were Yours
by Lisa Wingate

From Goodreads:
Memphis, 1939. Twelve-year-

old Rill Foss and her four younger siblings live a magical life aboard their family's Mississippi River shanty boat. But when their father must rush their mother to the hospital one stormy night, Rill is left in charge—until strangers arrive in force. Wrenched from all that is familiar and thrown into a Tennessee Children's Home Society orphanage, the Foss children are assured that they will soon be returned to their parents—but they quickly realize the truth.

Aiken, South Carolina, present day. Born into wealth and privilege, Avery Stafford seems to have it all: a successful career as a federal prosecutor, a handsome fiancé, and a lavish wedding on the horizon. But when Avery returns home to help her father weather a health crisis, a chance encounter leaves her with uncomfortable questions and compels her to take a journey through her family's long-hidden history, on a path that will ultimately lead either to devastation or to redemption.

Based on one of America's real-life scandals—in which Georgia Tann, director of a Memphis-based adoption organization, kidnapped and sold poor children to wealthy families all over the country—Lisa Wingate's riveting, wrenching, and ultimately uplifting tale reminds us how, even though the paths we take can lead to many places, the heart never forgets where we belong.

The Book Group will meet at 1:00 PM on January 12 for a short business meeting and a discussion of the book led by Denise Hartsough.

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

Qigong at UCC

Why not start the New Year off right with a new self-care practice? Come and join the UCC Qigong sessions every **Tuesday** and **Saturday**!

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



Each session begins at **9:00 AM** with a brief check-in followed by 30 minutes of exercise (with our cameras and mics turned off). We are led, via videorecording, by an experienced instructor.

If you have been curious about Qigong, our Zoom group is a great way to give it a try. Newcomers are always welcome to join in.

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](#).

3rd Saturday Breakfast Group



The UCC Breakfast Group will meet for breakfast on **Saturday, January 20** at 9:00 AM at Garcia's Mexican Kitchen located right next door to UCC.

Please RSVP to Ron if you plan to attend the 3rd Saturday Breakfast Group. An RSVP is not required but sometimes plans change at the last minute and checking in with Ron will ensure you are having breakfast alone. Ron's contact info is ronald.crowell@wmich.edu or (269)599-1242.

8TH PRINCIPLE

BUILD a
diverse
BELOVED
COMMUNITY

8

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. We regularly share insights and resources in the space to help us do this work.

We are excited to announce that the **UUC Exploring Anti-Racism Group** led by **Eric Nelson** will begin meeting again once a month to help us individually and collectively dismantle white supremacy culture.

The January meeting will be held on January 23 at 7 PM via Zoom. We will refresh our memories with a discussion about **White Privilege**.



To prepare for the discussion, please consider watching a 22-minute video on understanding white privilege featuring Dr. Robin DiAngelo. Dr. DiAngelo is the author of *"What Does it Mean to Be White? Developing White Racial Literacy."* While working as an anti-racist educator, she has heard justifications of racism by white people in workshops for over two decades. This justification, which she calls "white fragility," is a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, provoking a range of defensive moves including outward displays of emotions like anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation.

Click [HERE](#) to access the video (or search YouTube for "Deconstructing White Privilege with Dr. Robin DiAngelo")

Click [HERE](#) to attend the Zoom meeting on January 23. Meeting ID 269 324 7262

Another opportunity for anti-racist education will begin in January when anti-racist educator **Lynn Burnett** hosts his second annual course on [White Antiracist Spirituality in U.S. History](#). The series of four 1.5-hour workshops will include powerful examples of UU spirituality in action. This workshop series will explore ideas and practices around Beloved Community, cultivating hope through taking action, the grounding that comes with being rooted in history, and much more.

In order to be accessible to everyone from coast to coast, there will be two different sessions. These sessions will be exactly the same.

- An earlier session will meet on Tuesdays at 3PM Pacific/6PM Eastern. The dates for those are January 2, 9, 16, and 23.
- A later session will meet on Thursdays at 6PM Pacific/9PM Eastern. The dates for those are January 4, 11, 18, and 25.

Each session begins with an opening grounding and discussion, followed by breakout groups, a whole group discussion, and closing reflections.

If you wish to participate, please email Burnett.Lynn@gmail.com for details and the event link.



CLIMATE CHANGE



UUCC member Nicky Leigh believes Climate Change is an existential threat to life on planet Earth. She works to raise awareness about the problem through the Kalamazoo Climate Crisis Coalition and is active with the Kalamazoo Township Climate Action Planning Committee. In the coming months, she plans to provide UUCC with a series of newsletter articles about Climate Change covering what it is, the possible ramifications, and what can be done. She is also willing to answer any questions our newsletter readers might have. Her first article starts at the beginning with her memories of how the climate crisis unfolded. The following is not necessarily a factual account. It is based

on Nicky's remembrances and feelings.

Climate Change - The Beginning

During the '70s, '80s, '90s people my age heard about greenhouse gases and the heating of the world. But then that sort of died as a topic as we were all into raising families, marching for civil rights, gay rights, immigration rights, women's rights, whatever rights. We were siloed and content in our own silo or silos. We were busy and couldn't be concerned about that which wasn't constantly put before us by the news, by TV, by radio. Those were our sources of news back then.

President Ronald Reagan removed the solar panels that President Jimmy Carter had installed, and apart from thinking what a waste of money, there really wasn't any discussion about why they had been installed or why they were being removed.

In 1995, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change began holding yearly Conference of the Parties (COP) to assess the progress the world was making with Climate Change. With COP 3, in 1997, the UN created the Kyoto Protocols but the US didn't sign on. There were actions around this by groups concerned about the greenhouse effect but again it was largely ignored. We didn't sign on, so there wasn't much news. It was basically ignored and we carried on without much concern for the future.

I was living in Colorado at the time and we were beginning to talk about the weather. What used to be nice comfortable days in the '70s, were now warm in the '80s and occasional '90s. The lodge pole pines were dying by the millions all throughout the West and Canada because it was no longer cold enough in winter to kill the pine borer beetles. Spring was coming two weeks earlier than usual and the summer was lasting two weeks longer. We were starting to think about a shortened ski season and what that would do to our economy.

With the 9/11 attack in 2001 and the change in politics, climate again became a low priority. For the general population and most of our politicians Climate Change wasn't yet a thing.

Climate Change, as a human-created problem, seemed to slowly leak into my consciousness after watching the film *An Inconvenient Truth* (released in 2008) becoming full-blown by around 2015. At first, it was, wow, climate change is really happening, and not just in Colorado. Then it grew to, this is serious. It is changing weather patterns and affecting everything. To, this is an EXISTENTIAL EMERGENCY. *(Continued on page 13)*

SUSTAINABILITY

I believe if we don't do something and quickly, this is the end of the world as we know it! Not the end of the world, not the end of humanity, but the end as we currently know it.

With the last COP, COP28, the final document issued and accepted by the country delegates named fossil fuels as a primary source of carbon emissions for the first time in the 28 years of meetings. Progress, or as Armstrong said, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for Mankind."

During 2024, I will be sharing climate change articles in the newsletter to help the issue stay front and center for you, for me, for everyone. We cannot let it again slip to the background.

Sincerely,

Nicky

nickyleigh1226@gmail.com



Finding Joy Through a Smaller Environmental Foot Print

Our **Sustainability Group** meets on the third Monday of each month to reflect on their personal sustainability journeys, to share their successes and failures, and to explore ideas for promoting sustainable living at UUC and in the wider community.

At their last meeting, a few members of the Sustainability Group attended the [Kalamazoo Wild Ones Pints and Native Plants](#) meeting and had an opportunity to meet **Quyen Edwards**, the Portage District Library's **Seed Library** Coordinator.

Launched in May 2021, PDL's Seed Library provides free seeds for community use.

Seeds are located in the large green card catalog between the Heritage Room and the Makerspace on the main level. You do not need to have a Portage District Library card to participate. In December, they began providing seeds from **native plants** for people to use in their landscaping.



Quyen also let us know that the library would be offering a Winter **Sowing Workshop** on Saturday, **January 20** from **10 AM—12 PM** so folks can learn the principles of the Winter Sowing Germination Method to grow your own native plants from seed, while storing them outdoors all winter.

Visit the [library website](#) to learn more about the seed library and to register for the workshop.



The group also learned (thanks to Regena Nelson) that instead of sponsoring a Climate Emergency Month this year, the WMU Climate Change Working Group and their partners are springing into climate action for a whole semester! Events begin on January 15 and will continue through the end of April. Click [HERE](#) to access the **Climate Emergency: Spring into Action 2024** events calendar and look for ways to get involved in the fight against Climate Change!

The Sustainability Group's next regular meeting will be on **Monday, January 15** at **7:00 PM** via Zoom. Newcomers, no matter what stage of the sustainability journey they are on, are always welcome to this group! Contact Miriam (uucommunity@gmail.com) for more information.

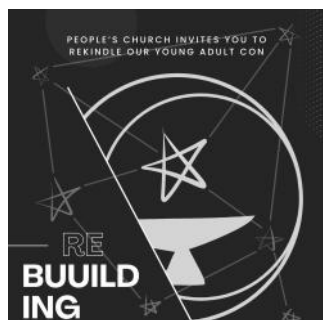
RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION

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

The transition from youth to adult in our Unitarian Universalist congregations is not always a smooth one. Our dedicated programs for young people tend to end with high school graduation and we sometimes make it hard for young folks to participate in other ways. For example, Sunday morning at 10:00 AM is not the always best time for people in university or working service sector jobs to engage with our congregations. Finding ways to help our young folks connect is an important way for us to help them feel as if they belong.



Fortunately for us, there is a long history in Michigan of young UUs organizing supportive community for themselves. For many years each January, there has been a regional gathering of UU Young Adults held at Peoples Church in Kalamazoo. Covid-19 put a pause on this annual event and also created a leadership vacuum as the organizing torch was not passed on during the pandemic years.



Much institutional knowledge was lost but it was not totally forgotten. Some enthusiastic young UUs have gotten together with plans to reboot the Young Adult UU Conference (a Con for short) at People's Church on **January 12-14**. They are appropriately calling it **RebUUilding Community**. It is open to any 18-35 year-olds interested in spending the weekend at the church with other UU young adults from around the region, connecting, laughing, playing, resting, and filling your spirit.

RebUUilding Community promises to be a fun weekend with workshops, worship, games, food, friends, and fun. Workshops will include art, yoga, spray painting, community building, worship planning, poetry writing, a nature hike, and more. Click [HERE](#) for more information and to register or visit the People's Church website: peopleschurch.net.

To meet the needs of young families and young folks at UUCC, we are going to switch things up a bit in the new year. Starting in January, our Sunday morning programs will be focused on **the K-6 grade age group**. Older kids are welcome to join the fun or stay upstairs to attend the Sunday service if they prefer. Downstairs, we will explore UU values through fun Lego-building activities.

The **Youth Group** for kids 13-18 will begin meeting either onsite or via Zoom at another time and will continue to focus on social justice activities around Climate Change and LGBTQIA+ rights as that is where their interests are. More details about Youth Group meetings will be coming soon.

Another new thing I am going to try in 2024 is to partner with Open House Theatre Company to put on a **summer day camp at UUCC**. The camp will give kids in grades 1-6 the opportunity to explore acting and theatre craft in a supportive UU atmosphere. I could certainly use some help organizing

and planning the day camp. If you are interested in helping out, please come to our next organizational meeting at UUCC at 11 AM on January 12 or send me an email to let me know you are interested.

Onward and Upward! Miriam

DATE	LESSONS	VOLUNTEERS
January 7	Lego ValUUes	Isaac Epskamp-Hunt
January 14	Lego ValUUes	Eric and Regena Nelson
January 21	Lego ValUUes	Pat Timm
January 28	Lego ValUUes	Mary Roscoe

OPPORTUNITIES



The City of Kalamazoo sponsors a community-wide day of service in January each year in honor of the late **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.** This year's **Day of Service** will take place on **Monday, January 15.**

Social service organizations around Kalamazoo County provide opportunities for community volunteers to take a day-on rather than a day off. Community members are encouraged to celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. King by finding ways to serve our community.

Volunteer registration is coordinated through Gryphon Place. You can visit [their website](#) to learn more, browse volunteer opportunities, and sign up to help.

UCC Civil Conversations Group



Over the past few months, our Civil Conversations group has been exploring the themes of "Talking Our Walk" and "Conversation Lead-Ins" to be more straightforward with our beliefs. Last week we shared our personal T-shirts, yard signs, and more that display a message of personal conviction and often act as a conversation starter with friends, family, and even strangers.

Our next Civil Conversations meeting will take place on **January 11 at 7:00 PM** via Zoom. We'll watch a 10-minute Ted Talk video that addresses ***Using the Power of Art to Socially Engage our Community***. The video will be followed by a group discussion.

Click [HERE](#) to register for Civil Conversations. Meeting ID 965 8726 7254

Join the UCC Singers!

The choir plans to sing during the service on Sunday, **January 28.** Come and add your voice to their song!

Practices are on **Sunday mornings at 9:00 AM.** No auditions or judgment! People of all singing abilities and experience are welcome. At UCC, we believe that ***everyone can sing!***



Questions? Contact our Music Director, Chris: christopherpetersmark@gmail.com

January Art Wall: Kelly Root

We are delighted to share the artwork of **Kelly Root** on the UCC Art Wall.

In her young life, Kelly was an avid artist who spent countless hours drawing. In 1994, years of insisting she could not be a transgender woman took its toll, and mental health problems and substance abuse



overtook her life. She would effectively stop drawing regularly, only briefly picking up a pencil a few times over the next two decades to make the occasional gift.

In 2020 Kelly finally accepted who she was, and two years later a friend would inspire her to pick up her pencils once again.

Kelly now spends as much free time as she can creating, whether in graphite, charcoal, colored pencils, watercolors, and ink, frequently all at once. She continues to gift art to her friends and family, sharing a bit of herself whenever she can.

Kelly's art will be on display through the end of February. You can view the Art Wall on Sundays from 8:30 AM—2 PM or by appointment. We hope to host a reception for Kelly sometime in January. Please watch the Weekly Email for details.



JANUARY 2024



DAY	DATE	EVENT	TIME
Monday	January 1	HAPPY NEW YEAR	All Day
Tuesday	January 2	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	January 3	Board of Trustees Meeting	6:30 PM
Thursday	January 4	Stewardship Committee Meeting	1:00 PM
Friday	January 5	Growth Team	10:00 AM
Saturday	January 6	Qigong Mindfulness Retreat 1st Saturday Game Gathering	9:00 AM 9:30 AM 1:00 PM
Sunday	January 7	Choir Practice Letter to Self with Rev. Gy UU Exploration for Kids After-Service Social Time	9:00 AM 10:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:00 AM
Tuesday	January 9	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	January 10	Sunday Services Committee Meeting	5:30 PM
Thursday	January 11	Civil Conversations Group	7:00 PM
Friday	January 12	Women's Book Group	1:00 PM
Saturday	January 13	Qigong	9:00 AM
Sunday	January 14	Choir Practice Peace Through Understanding with Bob Weir UU Exploration for Kids After-Service Social Time and Souper Sunday Program Council Meeting	9:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:00 AM 11:00 AM 11:20 AM
Monday	January 15	Sustainability Group	7:00 PM
Tuesday	January 16	Qigong	9:00 AM
Thursday	January 18	Thoughtful Thursday with Emilee Petersmark	7:00 PM
Saturday	January 20	Qigong 3rd Saturday Breakfast Group	9:00 AM 9:00 AM
Sunday	January 21	Choir Practice The Tree of Contemplative Practice with Rev. Larry Farris UU Exploration for Kids After-Service Social Time	9:00 AM 10:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:00 AM
Tuesday	January 23	Qigong Exploring Anti-Racism with Eric	10:00 AM 7:00 PM
Wednesday	January 24	NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	12:00 PM
Saturday	January 27	Qigong Chase Away the Blues Chili Supper	9:00 AM 6:00 PM
Sunday	January 28	Choir Practice Unchain Yourself with Rev. Gy UU Exploration for Kids After-Service Social Time	9:00 AM 10:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:00 AM
Tuesday	January 30	Qigong Successfully Creating New Habits and Kicking the Old Ones with Darby	9:00 AM 7:00 PM

UU Community Church is served by:

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Consulting Minister
By Appointment Only
gyludvig@gmail.com
Cell: 269-352-2412

Miriam Epskamp
Office Administrator and
Director of Religious Education
uucommunity@gmail.com
Church office: 269-324-7262
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Chris Petersmark
Music Director
christopherpetersmark@gmail.com
Cell phone: 248-535-4197

2024-2024 Board of Trustees

Steve Tasko

Eric Nelson

Pat Timm

Marsha Laya

Mike Graham

**The next Newsletter Deadline is
Wednesday, January 24 at NOON**

Please send submissions to:

uuccnewsletter@gmail.com

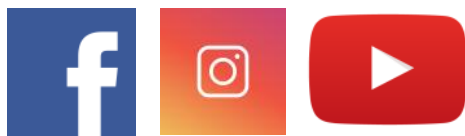
CommUUnity Matters

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