



CommUnity Matters

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest Michigan

February 2024

FEBRUARY SUNDAY SERVICES

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

February 4: *El Na Refanah La* with Rabbi Simone Schicker

Rabbi Schicker, the spiritual leader of Temple B'nai Israel, the Reform Jewish congregation in Kalamazoo joins us to share Jewish understandings of healing.

Zoom Meeting ID: 979 8910 0279 Click [HERE](#) to register.

February 11: *Reunite Rain and Root* with Rev. Gy

Do you get tired sometimes? The work we do to live in right relations and to build a sustainable and just Beloved Community can be exhausting. We work and we work but so much remains undone. Let's talk about strategies to address fatigue and keep moving forward.

Zoom Meeting ID: 961 3466 3366 Click [HERE](#) to register.

February 18: *Branching Out* with Rev. Gy

The familiar is comfortable but it can also be a limiting factor. Join Rev. Gy to explore the power of searching out and making new connections.

Zoom Meeting ID: 929 4756 1496 Click [HERE](#) to register.

February 25: *The Courage to Be You... Better* with Dann and Tara Sytsma

Professional improv performers Dann and Tara will share techniques and philosophies that are not only useful for creating great moments on the improv stage, but are also powerful communication tools in real life. Improvisors work to stay present and ask, "What does this moment need?" Courage is fueled by re-translating negative emotions that naturally enter our minds into positive, productive directions. Our presentation will be a fun journey through the improviser mindset. Audience participation is highly encouraged.

Zoom Meeting ID: 944 1635 2577 Click [HERE](#) to register.



Spiritual Theme for February STRETCHING OUR BRANCHES

During the course of this church year, we are taking inspiration for our spiritual explorations from the Tree of Life. In February we will stretch our branches to explore reaching beyond our comfort zones.

At first glance, it doesn't seem as though trees can teach us much about outreach. After all, trees are stuck in one spot. They can't search out new experiences or relationships. The best they can do is grow towards something. It turns out trees have developed some pretty ingenious ways to adapt to changes in their environment. Tree branches stay flexible so they can bend and move freely when storms blow in. Trees have the ability to direct the growth of their roots and shoots toward the sun, water, and nutrients that sustain them and away from the things that do not. Scientists call this ability to readily adapt to change plasticity.

Questions to ponder in this month of reaching out:

What are we growing towards, as individuals and as a religious community?

What is stopping us from seeking out new perspectives, experiences, or relationships?

How can we cultivate flexibility and plasticity in our lives to help us reach beyond our comfort zones?

GUESTS IN THE PULPIT

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



Rabbi Schicker (she/her) is the sole spiritual leader of Temple B'nai Israel, the Reform Jewish congregation in Kalamazoo. She was ordained in 2018 from the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, Ohio. Originally from Houston, Texas, she was raised in an interfaith home where she was taught the importance of faith and belief in living a life of good acts. Rabbi Schicker serves on the Women's Rabbinic Network (WRN) Board and is the current President of the Board of Friendship Village Kalamazoo as well as the co-chair of Faith Alliance: a program of OutFront Kalamazoo. She is an avid reader, a stepmom to three amazing kids, and the pet mom to one adorable dog and five independent cats. She lives in Kalamazoo with her partner, who is a handyman and church organist.

Dann and Tara Sytsma blend their professional backgrounds in sales, training, and management with their improv theatre training to bring you Improv Effects, an applied improv coaching firm. **Improv Effects** has worked with over 150 different companies, many of which appear on the Fortune 500 list. Their inclusive facilitation style allows them to introduce improv skills and concepts in an accessible, non-threatening way. Dann has been performing improvisational theatre since 1997. His formal improv training includes studying at the esteemed Improv Olympic (iO) and Second City in Chicago. He has worked with – and tutored – some of the top improv performers in Southwest Michigan. Dann's professional history is in chemistry, including method development & validation, business development, and college instruction. He is also the owner of Crawlspace Comedy Theatre and the founder of Crawlspace Eviction, Kalamazoo's premier improv troupe. Tara's improv background spans the years since 2003. She performs with Crawlspace Eviction and is the Director of Education for Crawlspace Comedy Theatre. Tara instructs the Level 1 adult improv course. Tara's professional background outside of improv is in education, both in the areas of biology and the arts. She also supervised education staff in after-school programming.



Our February Thoughtful Thursday conversation on February 22 at 7 PM via Zoom will feature special guests **David Paul, M.D., Ph.D.** and **Bonnie Paul, Ph.D.**

This husband-and-wife team are the co-founders of The Freedom to Choose Project, a California-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Both Drs. Paul served as graduate psychology faculty for over a decade, and have worked with thousands of incarcerated people and large volunteer teams in medium-to-maximum security prisons since 2004. Their corporate specialty is working with resolving healthcare burnout.

FROM THE MINISTER



While Rev. Gy is recovering from their recent arduous trip to Europe, we will take the opportunity to hear from a different Unitarian Universalist voice. The following blog post was shared on [Braver/Wiser](#) in September 2022. The author **Priscilla Shumway** (she/her) is a member of the Unitarian Church in Charleston, SC. She has served as Vestry Board Chair, Worship Services Committee Chair, and recently headed up a 5-year strategic plan for the church. Priscilla considers herself an “awe-ist” and is filled with daily gratitude for her family and friends. She is the author of **Embrace Your Wobbles: Wisdom From the Yoga Mat**.

Choosing to Connect

“When we acknowledge that all life is sacred and that each act is an act of choice and therefore sacred, then life is a sacred dance lived consciously each moment. When we live at this level, we participate in the creation of a better world.” –Scout Cloud Lee

Every Saturday morning, my husband and I rise early and head off to volunteer at our local food bank. The food bank is supported by people from twenty-eight different congregations, including our Unitarian Church. After we set up, volunteers gather as our Director reads a Bible passage and a prayer.

As a UU and atheist, these prayers initially caused me discomfort. As I stood listening, all I heard were the things that I did NOT agree with. But by focusing on the things I disagreed with I created a sense of separation, of judgment, between me and the others.

Over two years, as my relationship with the other volunteers and the mission of the outreach has deepened, there has been a change in my relationship to these prayers. Now during the prayer, I hear the sentiments I agree with, rather than those I disagree with. I agree that we all give of our time, talent, and treasure to do this work; that the work we do is important in the lives of our clients; that we who volunteer feel called to do this work.

But who or what is calling us? This is where the prayers and I diverge. The prayers suggest we are called to do this work because God directs our life and calls us to it. But as an atheist, I feel called to do this work because of my belief that with every act and choice I make, I can create a better world. While I may have little control over the larger world, I can help create a better world in my own neighborhood, one client, one connection at a time.

Now as I pray with my friends, I feel a deep sense of connection to them and the sacredness of this work we all feel called to do. I realize it is my actions and choices that determine my connection to others. Now it no longer matters to me who or what is calling each of us, only that we show up in love and faith to do the work of creating a better world.



CARING COMMUNITY



FEBRUARY CARING COMMUNITY NEWS

February is the shortest month, so if you're having a miserable month, try to schedule it for February.

— Lemony Snickett

Joys, Concerns, and Member News:

In January, our **Rev. Gy** traveled to Hungary to visit family. She shared the experience with us in a Sunday service and we felt we were there with her for the joys and pains of family.

At the annual Chili Supper, we welcomed around sixty guests and enjoyed live music from our talented friend **Dana Scott**. Many thanks to **Joe** and **Nancy Calme** who organized the event with lots of help from the **Stewardship Committee**.

We happily had **Betty Lee Ongley** in our midst at the Chili Supper to help us celebrate her 98th birthday with cake and ice cream. We are so lucky to have her!

Sad news in the congregation was reported in January as well. **Stace Danielson's mother** has entered home hospice. Our dear friend **Herb Gross** passed away on January 10. **The Michael/Kurtz family** is mourning the loss of daughter/sister-in-law **Leah**. **Nancy Calme** lost a sheep to complications of the bitter cold weather.

There were also bright new beginnings in January. **Marsha Laya** is celebrating a new baby in her extended family. We have enjoyed seeing **lots of visitors**. Whether this is a result of our Outreach Team extending many invitations to participate to the wider community or **UUC** folks like **YOU** spreading the good news about this UU Community to family and friends (or both), great work everyone!

Happy Birthday!

Bright spots in the dark month of February include birthday celebrations for:

Feb 10 – **Hunter Ridley** and **Marsha Laya**, Feb 13- **Beverly Folz**, Feb 15 – **Regena Nelson**, Feb 26- **Joe Calme**

Remembering Friends Who Have Passed On:

We pause to remember UUC members **Barbara Cousins** (Oct 4, 1937 - Feb 11, 2009) and **John Folz** (Sept 29, 1925 - Feb 4, 2023) and Consulting minister **Greg Martin** (Apr 15, 1958 – Feb 12, 2017) and all that they contributed to this community.

Welcome Visitors

It was lovely to have **Leyna Fadely**, **Shannon Merrill**, **Chase Plank**, **Bryne Rohde** and friend **LaShandra**, **Maggie Slocum**, **Vanessa Johnson**, and **Asher** visit us this month. We were also delighted have members of the UUC Extended Family—**Christopher Grathwol**, **Jill Ongley**, and **Katy Ettwein** stop in to see us. We hope to see you all 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.

LEADERSHIP



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

- Discussed results of Name Change Survey and possible next steps.
- Discussed security updates suggested by law enforcement agencies and by a security company.
- Discussed the development of an account for capital purchases that depreciate and a replacement cycle for staff computers.

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

The next regular Board meeting will take place via Zoom on **Wednesday, February 7 at 6:30 PM.**

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

Chili Supper 2024

Thank you to everyone who helped make our annual chili supper a rousing success! We raised nearly \$400 in support of our many ministries. Special thanks to **Dana Scott** for providing some hot music to help us chase away the winter blues!



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 **February 11**. We will meet following the service and you can participate either in person or on Zoom.

Due to inclement weather, we held our January meeting via Zoom. We began by sharing memories of our dear friend **Herb Gross** who passed away the week before. It was heartwarming to hear people share stories about Herb and the many ways he will be remembered.

We then took time to **CELEBRATE** our December accomplishments:

We enjoyed great Sunday services from **Rev. Gy**, celebrated the **Solstice** with a fantastic service led by **Miriam, Chris**, and the **UUCS Singers**, and held our first onsite **Candlelight Christmas Eve** since 2018. We also held our annual **Burning Bowl** and “**Letter to Self**” traditions. We hosted a wonderful **Pancake Breakfast for LGBTQIA+ elders** with OutFront Kalamazoo. We completed our annual **Guest at Your Table** fundraiser and raised over \$1300 for the **Howard Fund** which provides emergency financial assistance to people in need. **Eric Nelson** hosted a wonderful **Mindfulness Meditation Retreat**. We also hosted an **additional 13 group meetings and activities!**

We learned about many upcoming **OPPORTUNITIES** including:

- **Help us plan Theatre Day Camp:** Open House Theatre Company and UUCS will collaborate on a summer theatre day camp for kids 6-12 y.o. If you know anyone who might be interested, spread the word. If you would like to be part of the planning committee, contact **Mary Roscoe** (lizoflynn@gmail.com).
- **Join the Art Wall Committee:** A new committee is forming to help bring more art to UUCS's walls and to allow local artists to share their work. Contact **Miriam** (uucommunity@gmail.com) if you would be interested in serving or just want to learn more.
- **Support a Medical Debt Forgiveness Project:** The Portage Progressive Church Alliance, a group of six congregations in the city of Portage, is exploring a medical debt forgiveness project. All of the churches in the alliance would raise money and pool it to purchase medical debt at pennies on the dollar with the goal of erasing it. Typically, every \$100 raised could relieve \$10,000 in medical debt. This project has the potential to transform the lives of people struggling to pay medical bills. As soon as we have more information about how we can get involved in this project, we will share it during a future Program Council meeting.

Please plan to join us at the next Program Council meeting on Sunday, February 11 at around 11:20 AM, in person or via Zoom, and help keep UUCS's programs going strong. We will serve a light soup luncheon before the Program Council Meeting. All donations will help support youth programs at UUCS. If you have any questions about Program Council, or items to add to the agenda, contact **Eric Nelson** (ericvnelson1@gmail.com)

LEARNING AND GROWTH



Our once-a-month Thoughtful Thursday Speakers Series provides 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 our Thoughtful Thursdays in real-time, you can always sign up to receive a recording of the event by filling out the Zoom registration form.

February 22: Freedom to Choose: Compassionate Service in Action



Our February Thoughtful Thursday will feature a conversation with the husband-and-wife team, **Drs. David and Bonnie Paul**, co-founders of [The Freedom to Choose Project](#), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit based in Santa Barbara, CA.

The Freedom to Choose Project is an award-winning nonprofit offering life-changing education to men and women in prison since 2004. Their mission is transforming the lives of individuals impacted by incarceration through compassionate experiential education.

The Freedom to Choose Project has served over 4,170 incarcerated participants in 39 prisons. The name of the Freedom to Choose Project derives from the work of the psychiatrist Viktor Frankl, who wrote *Man's Search for Meaning* after his experience interred in a Nazi Concentration Camp.

Everything can be taken from a person, but one thing: the last of human freedoms to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's way.—Viktor Frankl

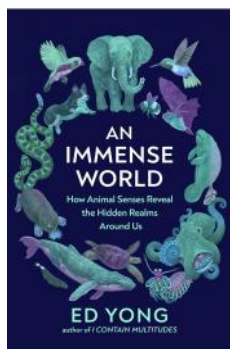
They utilize large teams of volunteers from all walks of life, transforming prison gymnasiums into inclusive learning laboratories that positively impact the lives of all involved. Participants discover that no matter how limiting their outside circumstances may appear, they still have the greatest freedom – to choose their attitude and response to life.

Drs. Paul will share more about their journey, how they came to work in prisons, and how the project is transforming lives. Come and be part of the conversation!

Click [HERE](#) to register for this Zoom meeting ID 940 0723 2771 or use this link: tinyurl.com/uuccfreedomtochoose



CONNECTION



Women's Book Group

**Friday, February 9
1:00 PM via Zoom**

February Selection:
An Immense World
by Ed Yong

From Goodreads:

The Earth teems with sights and textures, sounds and vibrations, smells and tastes, electric and magnetic fields. But every animal is enclosed within its own unique sensory bubble, perceiving but a tiny sliver of an immense world. This book welcomes us into a previously unfathomable dimension--the world as it is truly perceived by other animals.

We encounter beetles that are drawn to fires, turtles that can track the Earth's magnetic fields, fish that fill rivers with electrical messages, and humans that wield sonar like bats. We discover that a crocodile's scaly face is as sensitive as a lover's fingertips, that the eyes of a giant squid evolved to see sparkling whales, that plants thrum with the inaudible songs of courting bugs, and that even simple scallops have complex vision. We learn what bees see in flowers, what songbirds hear in their tunes, and what dogs smell on the street. We listen to stories of pivotal discoveries in the field, while looking ahead at the many mysteries which lie unsolved.

In An Immense World, author and acclaimed science journalist Ed Yong coaxes us beyond the confines of our own senses, allowing us to perceive the skeins of scent, waves of electromagnetism, and pulses of pressure that surround us. Because in order to understand our world we don't need to travel to other places; we need to see through other eyes.

The Book Group will meet at 1:00 PM on February 9 for a short business meeting and a discussion of the book led by **Sally Cowles**.

Click [HERE](#) to join the Book Group Zoom Meeting ID: 996 0783 5644 Passcode: 360981 Contact **Stephanie** (sargg.64@gmail.com) if you have questions about Women's Book Group.



Join the UCC Singers!

The choir will begin practicing for their March performance soon!

Sunday morning practices will begin on **February 18**. Meet at the piano at in the sanctuary at **9 AM**.

People of all singing abilities and experience are welcome. No auditions or judgement! At UCC, we believe that ***everyone can sing!***

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



Game Gathering

Our monthly Game Gathering hosted by the Connection Team will meet

on the lower level of UCC on Saturday, **February 3** from **1-4 PM** for an afternoon of board and card games.

Come and bring your favorite game and a snack to share. People of all ages and game-playing abilities are welcome to attend. Childcare is provided.

3rd Saturday Breakfast Group

The UCC Breakfast Group will meet for breakfast on **Saturday, February 17** at **9:00 AM** at Garcia's Mexican Kitchen located right next door to UCC.



Please RSVP to **Ron Crowell** if you plan to attend this gathering. 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.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Each month UU Community Church provides members, friends, and visitors many opportunities to grow spiritually not only through our thought-provoking Sunday services but also with guided spiritual practices, and small discussion groups designed to help center our hearts, minds, and bodies.

Qigong at UCC

Qigong is made from two Chinese characters denoting a singular concept and therefore written as one “word.” Individually, the characters are:

氣 Qì: Breath, spirit, or the vital energy that animates life.

功 Gōng: Achievement or skill that is earned with effort.



Together they capture the embodied spirituality of Qigong, a practice that combines breath and movement and invites one to move beyond the confines of the mind and embrace the wisdom found within our body. Curious? You should come and give it a try! The UCC Qigong Group meets every **Tuesday** and **Saturday**. Newcomers are always welcome.

Each session begins at **9:00 AM** with a brief check-in before participants turn off their cameras to practice in privacy.

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).

Spiritual Growth Small Group

The first meeting of our Spiritual Growth Small Group led by Rev. Gy will be on Wednesday, **February 28** at **6:30 PM**. The group will meet onsite and via Zoom to discuss different aspects of spiritual growth and development from a Unitarian Universalist perspective. Childcare will be provided.

Click [HERE](#) for the Zoom Link for this group. If you have any questions, please contact Rev. Gy (gyudvig@gmail.com) If you require childcare, please email Miriam (uucommunity@gmail.com)



Drop in Mindfulness Practice with Eric Nelson

Starting in February, Eric Nelson will host a drop-in Mindfulness Meditation practice on the **1st and 3rd Tuesday** of each month at the Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 1747 W Milham Ave in Portage. This month the dates are **February 6** and **February 20**.

You can also attend these sessions via Zoom. Click [HERE](#) to register or use this link: tinyurl.com/uuccdropin

All are welcome and no prior meditation experience is needed. Feel free to attend whenever your schedule allows. If you have any questions about these sessions, please contact Eric (ericvnelson1@gmail.com)

SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

Building the Beloved Community One Conversation at a Time

Our Civil Conversations Group meets once a month to practice skills that will help them engage in constructive conversations with people who hold differing viewpoints. Their next meeting, ***Going Against the Grain***, will be on **Thursday, February 8** from **7-8:30 PM** on Zoom. After reviewing Civil Conversation strategies, participants will split up into small groups for practice conversations. To that end, participants should plan to bring a viewpoint to the table that will set them apart from others in the group. This will allow us to engage all the Civil Conversations principles we've learned. Some examples of "going against the grain" views might be:



- *Campfires are an environmental nightmare and should be banned.*
- *Joel Osteen is a wise spiritual teacher worth listening to.*
- *It is immoral for us **not** to hunt deer and other wild game.*
- *Sex work is a valid way to make money with your body and should be legalized.*
- *American football is exploitive and dangerous and should be abolished.*

How do you "go against the grain"? Join us to respectfully engage in real Civil Conversations with each other and "talk our walk"! Click [HERE](#) to join the Zoom.

Any questions? Please contact group facilitator, Darby Fetzer (darbylynnfetzer@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 promoting sustainable living at UUC and in the wider community.

Last month the group discussed Public Act 233, which Gov. Gretchen Whitmer signed into law on Nov. 28. It was part of a clean energy package which passed the state that requires all power produced in Michigan to be carbon-neutral by 2040. Public Act 233 gives regulators control over where large renewable energy installations will be built. In January a group called Citizens for Local Choice formed a ballot committee to try to reverse this decision.



Sustainability resources shared include:

- Nancy Crowell recommends checking out [6 Reasons You Should Support Black Owned Businesses](#), a blog post from greenamerica.com. It is a great reminder that holistic sustainability and a thriving green economy are impossible without the inclusion of all.
- Group member **Carol Higgins** will give a Zoom presentation about the **Inflation Reduction Act** at noon on **February 9** at Fridays for the Future. Fridays for the Future is a program of our environmental justice partner, the Kalamazoo Climate Crisis Coalition. Click [HERE](#) to join the Zoom meeting. All are welcome!
- The WMU Climate Change Working Group and its partners are springing into climate action for a whole semester! Events are ongoing 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, February 19** 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.

CLIMATE CHANGE



UGCC 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 UGCC 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. In this installment, Nicky will try to summarize the climate problem.

Climate Change - Defining the Problem

The earth is estimated to be over 4.5 billion years old. The following covers (maybe) the last 800,000 years.

Very simplistically, in our modern Age, prior to the Industrial Revolution, the world was basically in balance. Animals breathed out CO₂ and the plants used the CO₂ for photosynthesis and exhaled O₂ which the animals breathed in. Nitrogen came from decaying plants and enriched the soil for the plants. Excess atmospheric heat could be absorbed by the ocean and helped to maintain oceanic plants and animals. Methane was spewed out of volcanoes and chasms, but was captured by the bogs and peat fields. Whenever this got too out of whack, we had an Ice Age or heating, and an equilibrium was again established.

When we talk about climate change, we are essentially talking about the heat effect of human-caused greenhouse gases (GHG). These gases stay within the atmosphere capturing the heat generated, which would have dissipated into space. Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution we have produced more energy (heat) through our activities than the world can absorb and the GHGs end up in the atmosphere. Gas for the most part rises.

The three main GHGs, of concern, are carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide.

We have ice core samples covering the last 800,000 years from Antarctica. In these samples, until the mid-1800s with the Industrial Revolution, carbon dioxide (CO₂) never exceeded 300 parts per million (ppm), methane (CH₄) never exceeded 800 parts per billion (ppb) and nitrous oxide (N₂O) rarely exceeded 280ppb. The Mauna Loa Observatory tracks the atmospheric CO₂ and the monthly average for December 2023 was 421ppm. That is an increase of 121ppm or over a 1/3 increase. In 2022, methane was 1,911ppb or over double what it was prior to the 1900s. Even though methane is a lot less extensive than CO₂, it has more than doubled compared to the 1/3 increase of CO₂. And, nitrous oxide reached 334ppb in 2021.

The above are global figures to which the U.S. contributes. What is in the atmosphere can't be directly attributable to any one country, but we are a major contributor to the problem.

- Carbon Dioxide - 300ppm -> 421ppm
- Methane - 800ppb -> 1900ppb
- Nitrous Oxide - 280ppb -> 334ppb

More on page 14

SUSTAINABILITY

In 2015, the percentages of GHG emissions created were:

- Carbon Dioxide 76%
- Methane 16%
- Nitrous Oxide 6%

Because of the magnitude of CO₂, it is how the discussion is framed, we speak of CO₂ equivalents. CO₂ does not have a specific lifespan. Depending on how it is processed, it can remain in the atmosphere for thousands of years. 50% remains after 30 years, then another 30% is removed in the next few centuries, and the remaining 20% will be there for thousands of years. 1 ton of methane is equivalent to 34 tons of CO₂ with a 12-year cycle, and 1 ton of Nitrous Oxide is equivalent to 264 of CO₂, with a 121-year cycle.

"In 2018, despite knowing more than we've ever known about human-caused climate change, humans produced more greenhouse gases than we've ever produced, at a rate three times that of population growth." (From ***We Are the Weather: Saving the Planet Begins at Breakfast*** by Jonathan Safran Foer, pg 48-49.)

After COP21 in 2015, 195 member states plus the European Union agreed to the Paris Agreement (also called the Paris Accords). This agreement called for a limit of less than 2 degrees C (3.6 F) over pre-industrial levels, and ideally for a limit of 1.5 degrees (2.7 F) to mitigate the effects of climate change. To achieve the 2 degree goal, we need net zero emissions by the end of the century. Preferably aiming for a 50% reduction of emissions by 2030 for an increase of only 1.5 degrees C (2.7F).

As referenced by Jonathan Foer, we are heading in the wrong direction.

Another major source of heat retention is water vapor. Unlike GHGs, it does not remain in the atmosphere, but falls back to earth as precipitation, such as rain, and snow. Also, for the most part, water vapor is not considered a direct result of human behavior. For example, the water evaporation due to irrigation is minimal compared to the evaporation of the oceans. These numbers, the maximum in the 800,000-year ice core to the modern 2021, are the problem.

- Carbon Dioxide - 300ppm -> 421ppm
- Methane - 800ppb -> 1900ppb
- Nitrous Oxide - 280ppb -> 334ppb

My awe is that the ice sheet in Antarctica is 2 kms deep and 800,000 years old. My worry is that the science community is sure that it is melting.

Sincerely,

Nicky

nickyleigh1226@gmail.com

Sources: <https://www.bas.ac.uk/data/our-data/publication/ice-cores-and-climate-change/>
<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/science/climbing-methane-levels-in-the-atmosphere-are-contributing-to-overall-rise-in-greenhouse-gases>
<https://www.epa.gov/climate-indicators/climate-change-indicators-atmospheric-concentrations-greenhouse-gases>

8TH PRINCIPLE

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.



February is **Black History Month**. Historian [Carter G. Woodson](#) began promoting the idea of setting aside time to educate people about Black history and culture in 1926. He designated the second week of February as “Negro History Week” to incorporate Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglas’s birthdays into activities. By the 1960s, Woodson’s vision had spread and grown into what is now known as Black History Month. It was officially recognized by President Gerald Ford in 1976. Thanks to the outstanding scholarship and ongoing struggle of black historians and educators, Black History is slowly claiming its rightful place as American History to be explored and discussed every day as an integral part of the American Experience. For those of us working to become anti-racist, Black History Month continues to be an opportunity to spend time more deeply exploring and celebrating Black histories and reflecting on how the past continues to impact us today. Events celebrating Black History Month in Kalamazoo include:

- [Origin Stories](#) an art exhibit opening on **February 2** at the Black Arts and Cultural Center.
- A presentation on **February 3** at the Air Zoo with [Dr. Sian Proctor](#), a mission pilot for SpaceX Inspiration4 and the first African-American woman to pilot a spacecraft.
- [Black Artists Exhibit](#) at the Kalamazoo Valley Community College Center for New Media gallery opens on **February 2**.
- [Kalamazoo History-Makers: Celebrating Black History Month](#) on **February 17** at the Epic Center.
- A free screening of the film [Black Art: In the Absence of Light](#) at the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts on **February 25**.

Our justice partners at [Interfaith Strategies for Advocacy and Action in the Community](#) (ISAAC) recently announced that **Layla Saad**, author of the renowned book, *Me and White Supremacy: Combat Racism, Change the World, and Become a Good Ancestor* has accepted an invitation to offer a **virtual fireside chat** with us on Saturday afternoon, **March 16** (time TBA). ISAAC President, Elder Doug King, will host the conversation with Ms Saad. ISAAC hopes to make free copies of Layla Saad’s book available. Many people have found her voice to be especially helpful in inviting them into deeper understanding of these concepts and exploring their impact on their lives. The book is organized as a 28-day guide to help readers, especially white people, to understand and identify the impact of white privilege and white supremacy in their lives and become better ancestors in shaping a better future for those who follow us. Please save the date so you can take part in this outstanding opportunity



The **UUCC Exploring Anti-Racism Group** led by Eric Nelson and Rev. Gy meets once a month to help us individually and collectively dismantle white supremacy culture. The next meeting is on **Tuesday, February 27 at 7 PM** via Zoom. Click [HERE](#) to attend the meeting ID, 269 324 7262 All are welcome to drop in and join this small group as your schedule allows.

RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION

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

"Ours is a little brick church with a rainbow flag and a Black Lives Matter banner out the front because we believe love is love and it is our responsibility to dismantle white supremacy culture and build a Beloved Community that benefits us all."

Our lay leaders used to say this every Sunday morning. I bet I am not the only one who has it memorized word for word! I have been thinking about that statement— *it is our responsibility to build a Beloved Community*— and how it relates to our spiritual theme of the month, Outreach.



According to the Boundless Love Project, the term Beloved Community was first coined by the American philosopher-theologian Josiah Royce before being popularized by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. during the Civil Rights Movement. The Beloved Community is a global vision of humans cooperating and sharing the earth's abundance so that all people can thrive.

The idea of the Beloved Community runs through our UU values (or principles if you prefer) whether it is respecting the inherent worthiness and dignity of every person, recognizing the interdependent web of life of which we are a part, or working towards a world infused with peace, liberty, and justice for all. These are the steps we must take to realize that vision of a world where everyone thrives. Then there is our newly adopted 8th UU principle. It doesn't beat around the bush. It clearly delivers a charge for Unitarian Universalists to build a diverse, multicultural, Beloved Community.

Building the Beloved Community requires us to move beyond the comfort of our pleasant pews and the familiar faces our church family and focus our view on the wider community where systemic racism, poverty, inequality, gun violence, housing discrimination, healthcare disparities, etc. are preventing our neighbors from thriving.

This is where outreach comes in. We need to reach out beyond our walls to build relationships with individuals and families from different backgrounds and walks of life. We need to reach out and partner with organizations committed to justice and that are working to spread anti-racist and anti-oppressive practices in the wider community. We need to reach out and then step back so that we can listen to and be led by those whose lives are being impacted by inequity, who have been struggling for liberation for generations. We need to reach out because one small UU congregation on the south end of Portage cannot possibly dismantle white supremacy culture and build a Beloved Community all on its own, nor should it even try.

This month at UUCC, we will be given many opportunities to open our hearts and minds to new ideas and perspectives, to devise strategies for overcoming obstacles like apathy and fatigue, and to cultivate the courage to say "Yes" when asked to reach beyond our comfort zone. The overarching

goal is to equip our congregation with the tools it needs to stretch our branches out into the community and build the partnerships we need to make our dream of the Beloved Community a little more real.

May it be so...

DATE	LESSONS	VOLUNTEERS
February 4	Lego ValUUes	Eric and Regena Nelson
February 11	Lego ValUUes	Pat Timm
February 18	Lego ValUUes	Mary Roscoe
February 25	Lego ValUUes	Isaac Epskamp-Hunt

OPPORTUNITIES



Snacks with the Sheriff

At the Service Auction last fall, UUC member and beloved aunt of Kalamazoo County Sheriff Rick Fuller, Mary Roscoe, offered a unique opportunity to meet with her nephew and ask him questions. The lucky bidders will have "Snacks with the Sheriff" on Sunday, **February 25 at 2 PM** at UUC. Mary is happy to announce there are a few seats available for this event. The suggested donation is \$20 per person. *(This is NOT a fundraiser for the Sheriff's office or re-election campaign. All funds will go to benefit UU Community Church.)* Please RSVP to Mary if you plan to attend. You can make a donation by check made out to UUC with Auction in the memo line or by using the Auction tile on the Vanco app.



Our friends at People's Church extend an invitation to attend **LGBTQIA+ & Pronouns 101** on **February 11 at 1 PM**.

This training presented by **Dell Darnell**, program manager at OutFront Kalamazoo will cover the basics of LGBTQ+ lives and experiences and will help participants learn proper terms, under-stand facts about gender identity, and discover how to be an advocate. Click [HERE](#) or call People's Church to register. A light lunch will be provided for all and child-care with one week's notice.

Meet the Artist: Kelly Root

We will hold a reception for our current Art Wall artist, **Kelly Root**, on Sunday, **February 18**, from **11:30 AM to 1 PM**.



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, or ink, frequently all at once. We have enjoyed having some of her creations on our Art Wall over the past few weeks.

We hope you will join us on February 18 for an opportunity to meet Kelly, show her our support, and talk about art and new beginnings.



Community Baby Shower Drive

**Saturday
February 24
9-11 AM**

UUC is a drop-off site!

Save
the
Date



RENEWAL RETREAT



JOURNEY WITHIN: A RETREAT FOR SELF-DISCOVERY AND WELL-BEING FEBRUARY 10, 9 AM - 2 PM

JOIN US AT UCC FOR A ONE-DAY RENEWAL RETREAT LED BY
PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION COACH, KATHRYN RAGAINS-WILSON
AND A TEAM OF WELL-BEING EXPERTS.

EXPLORE DAILY RENEWAL STRATEGIES, MIND-BODY CONNECTION,
AND CREATE AN INSPIRED VISION FOR 2024.

REGISTER NOW: [TINYURL.COM/JOURNEYUCC](https://tinyurl.com/JourneyUCC)



KATHRYN
RAGAINS-
WILSON



JOSIE MOORLEG



ERIC NELSON



REV. GY LUDVIG-
MCCARTNEY

COST: \$25.00
INCLUDES CATERED LUNCH.
SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE.

REGISTER





FEBRUARY



DAY	DATE	EVENT	TIME
Thursday	February 1	Stewardship Committee Meeting	1:00 PM
Friday	February 2	OHTC/UUCC Theatre Camp Working Group Meeting	10:30 AM
Saturday	February 3	Qigong Game Gathering	9:00 AM 1:00 PM
Sunday	February 4	El Na Refanah La with Rabbi Schicker and UU Exploration for Kids After Service Social Time	10:00 AM 11:00 AM
Tuesday	February 6	Qigong Drop-In Mindfulness Practice with Eric	10:00 AM 7:00 PM
Wednesday	February 7	Board of Trustees Meeting	6:30 PM
Thursday	February 8	Growth Team Meeting Civil Conversations Group	2:00 PM 7:00 PM
Friday	February 9	Women's Book Group	1:00 PM
Saturday	February 10	Qigong Renewal Retreat	9:00 AM 9:00 AM
Sunday	February 11	Reunite Rain and Root with Rev. Gy and UU Exploration for Kids After Service Social Time/Souper Sunday Program Council Meeting LGBTQIA+ & Pronouns 101 at Peoples Church	10:00 AM 11:00 AM 11:20 AM 1:00 PM
Tuesday	February 13	Women's Book Group	1:00 PM
Wednesday	February 14	VALENTINES DAY Sunday Services Committee Meeting	All Day 5:30 PM
Saturday	February 17	Qigong 3rd Saturday Breakfast Group	9:00 AM 9:00 AM
Sunday	February 18	Choir Practice Branching Out with Rev. Gy and UU Exploration for Kids After Service Social Time Art Wall Reception for Kelly Root	9:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:00 AM 11:30 AM
Monday	February 19	Sustainability Group	7:00 PM
Tuesday	February 20	Qigong Drop-In Mindfulness Practice with Eric	9:00 AM 7:00 PM
Wednesday	February 21	NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	12:00 PM
Thursday	February 22	Thoughtful Thursday with Drs. David and Bonnie Paul	7:00 PM
Saturday	February 24	NAACP Baby Shower Drive Qigong	9-11 AM 9:00 AM
Sunday	February 25	Choir Practice The Courage to Be You...Better with Dann and Tara Sytsma and UU Exploration for Kids After Service Social Time Snacks with the Sheriff	9:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:00 AM 2:00 PM
Tuesday	February 27	Qigong Exploring Anti-Racism Group	9:00 AM 7:00 PM



UU Community Church is served by:

Rev. Gy Ludvig-McCartney M.Div., M.A.
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
Cell phone: 269-993-8758

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, February 21 at NOON**

Please send submissions to:

uuccnewsletter@gmail.com

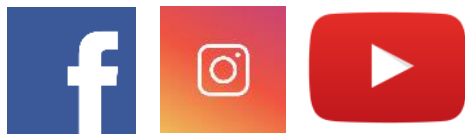
CommUUnity Matters

Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest Michigan

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



CONNECT WITH US!



uucommunity@gmail.com
www.uucommunitychurch.org
www.facebook.com/uuccswmi
www.instagram.com/uuccswmi/

