



CommUUunity Matters

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest Michigan

April 2024

APRIL SUNDAY SERVICES

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

April 7: Global Swarming with Rev. Gy

The world seems to be facing multiple crises from war and famine to climate change and the rise of authoritarianism. Now is not the time to lean into ideologies that “other” people in need. We need to find ways to work together to save us all or we shall certainly perish together.

Zoom Meeting ID: 924 4260 5244 Click [HERE](#) to register.

April 14: The Great Divide with Rev. Gy

Strong intergenerational relationships were the norm for most of human evolution and essential for human survival. The last 50 years, however, have seen a growing trend towards greater age segregation in almost all facets of life. Is it possible for us to restore multigenerational community?

Zoom Meeting ID: 997 0745 9995 Click [HERE](#) to register.

April 21: Earth Day Sunday: Voices of Youth with UUCC young adults and guest Mia Breznau

As we approach the 54th anniversary of Earth Day, we will listen to the voices of young people in our congregation and community as they reflect on the current state of the planet and their hopes for the future.

Zoom Meeting ID: 972 8707 2823 Click [HERE](#) to register.

April 28: Bee Joyful with Jessica Thompson

Bee Joyful Shop founder Jessica Thompson discusses the mission of her store, Bee Joyful, and details the various sustainable initiatives they are undertaking for our community.

Zoom Meeting ID: 933 9978 4232 Click [HERE](#) to register.



Spiritual Theme for April ENTWINED GROVES

During the course of this church year, we are taking inspiration for our spiritual explorations from the Tree of Life.

We generally think of trees as disconnected loners, competing with other trees for water, nutrients, and sunlight, but a growing body of scientific data is showing this not to be the case. Trees of the same species are quite communal, and will often form alliances with trees of other species. Forest trees have evolved to live in cooperative, interdependent relationships, maintained by communication and a collective intelligence.

Unitarian Universalists talk a lot about interdependent relationships. Interdependence is a core concept in our faith tradition. Our 7th Principle reminds us that humanity is merely one part of a vast interdependent web of existence and, like trees in a forest, only by living in harmony with the whole may we realize our greatest potential.

Questions to ponder this month as reflect on Interdependence:

How does our individualist culture limit your awareness of interdependence?

How does your awareness of interdependence inform how you interact with people and the planet?

GUESTS IN THE PULPIT

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



Mia Breznau is a high school senior from Kalamazoo. For the last two years, she's been a member of the Ardea Youth Climate Coalition, a high school advocacy group through the Kalamazoo Nature Center. She also co-founded National Youth for the Climate Emergency (NYCE), which serves to amplify youth climate work across the country. She is strongly passionate about climate activism, specifically youth engagement, climate education, clean energy, and regenerative agriculture. This year, she's organized an anti-fossil-fuel FFF protest, testified before State Congress in support of standardized climate curriculums, lobbied extensively

for the recently enacted Clean Energy Future Plan, and much more! After graduation, she plans to pursue a BS degree in environmental or climate science before pursuing a Ph.D., with the end goal of becoming an academic researcher in the field of coral paleoclimatology. Her ultimate goal is to preserve pristine nature, and she hopes to train the next generation of environmental advocates to do the same.

Jessica Thompson is the founder of the Bee Joyful Shop in downtown Kalamazoo. It is Michigan's first Zero Waste Shop and Refillery featuring locally-made and sustainably sourced zero-waste products. Jessica lived "off-the-grid" for most of her childhood with sustainability in her roots. Without access to electricity, indoor plumbing, or running water, she was forced to be resourceful, which led to self-sufficient habits and Earth-friendly tactics. During college she learned to love the conveniences of modern life but parenthood and life as a single parent made her acknowledge the amount of waste and plastic pollution "convenience" was generating. She knew there had to be an affordable, accessible solution for all individuals to make Earth-friendly changes that are good for people and our planet.



Our **Thoughtful Thursday** guest on **April 18** at **7 PM** via Zoom is **Mike Weis**. You can learn more about this gathering on [page 8](#).



Mike Weis is the owner of the Kalamazoo-based landscape company, [Dropseed! Native Gardens and Ecological Restoration](#). He has been gardening with native plants since 2005. Weis also works seasonally for [Hidden Savanna Native Plant Nursery](#) and volunteers as an ecological steward for [Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy](#) and [Stewards of Kleinstuck](#), where he serves as a board member.

Mr. Weis also serves on the Executive Committee and the Programming Committee of the Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones Natural Landscaping chapter. In addition to these ecology endeavors, Mr. Weis is also an accomplished percussionist, composer and conceptual photographer.

FROM THE MINISTER



From the Minister

Rev. Rachel Myslivy,
UUA Climate Justice Organizer

I am now (and forever!) reflecting on the question...how can we center love in the climate movement? For me, it's all about relationships. ***I do not want to build the world that is right for me, I want to collaboratively cultivate a world where all communities thrive.***

This means shifting from a singular mindset, a narrow focus, a myopic vision into an expansive reimagining, an abundance of possibility, and - yes, friends - collective liberation for all. There is no quick and easy fix to the problems of our world. For me, there are unbounded possibilities when I recognize that I alone do not have the answer. Of course, I can't single handedly solve the complex, interconnected crisis that is climate change, but goodness sometimes it's easy to fall into that mindset. There's no time! There's no time! I am here to remind us all that there is always time for love in our movements.

When it feels like everything in the world is on fire and my heart breaks with the enormity of it all while my task list has more than I can possibly accomplish in a year of Sundays, it can be tempting to push forward as fast as possible. Still, if I do that, and you do that, and everyone pushes forward independently, well, you can see where that gets us. For me, this means embracing curiosity, humility, and grace. Spending time with colleagues to learn about who they are, what their vision is, how they think we should move forward, so that when we do move forward, we move forward together. Does it take more time to build relationships? Does it slow down the work? Yes. Is it worth it?

Absolutely.

I find grounding and renewal in Viktor Frankl's quote, *Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.* Today, I invite you all to pause. Slow down. Reflect on how you can center love in your actions. I promise your next thought, your next response, your next move will be all the better for it.



STEWARDSHIP

There is still time to make a pledge to support YOUR spiritual community in the coming year! Send in your pledge card today! There is also still time to RSVP to our Stewardship Celebration on April 6. Childcare and transportation are available! Click [HERE](#) to [RSVP](#).

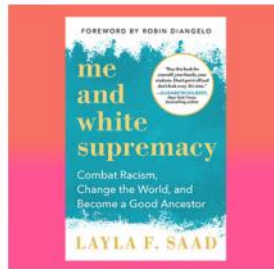
You are cordially invited to
Unitarian Universalist Community Church
**Stewardship
Celebration**
with entertainment by
Magician Evan D. Priem
5 PM on April 6
RSVP Today!



Thank you to all the UCC folks who participated in the [Interfaith Strategies for Advocacy and Action in the Community](#) (ISAAC) Fireside Chat with Layla Saad, author of *Me and White Supremacy*.

If you missed the event, a recording is currently available on ISAAC's YouTube page: youtube.com/watch?v=laULWson8kl

If you would like to discuss the book further with UCC folks, join our **Exploring Anti-Racism Group** (see [page 10](#) for more information).



CARING COMMUNITY



APRIL CARING COMMUNITY NEWS

*Now the noisy winds are still, April's coming up the hill
All the spring is in her train led by shining ranks of rain
Pit, pat, patter, clatter, sudden sun and clatter patter
All things ready with a will, April's coming up the hill!*

– Mary Mapes Dodge

Joys, Concerns, and Member News:

We were all saddened to learn of two untimely deaths in our extended church family.

Robert Foote (click [HERE](#) for the obituary), the son of UCC founders **Lin and Alice Foote**, and **Linsey Furry** (click [HERE](#) for the obituary) a long time UCC member, music director, and friend.

Our thoughts and prayers are with **Bob McWhorter** as he struggles with serious health issues. We are also holding **Chris Petersmark** in our hearts hoping that his dislocated thumb heals quickly and completely.

In happier news, **Matthew Nelson** has been accepted into graduate program at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in his field of study -theoretical condensed matter physics! We wish him well as he pursues his goal of a research career.

Kathy Hays is looking forward to traveling to California to visit family including a brother she hasn't seen in a long time. **Steve Tasko** and **Denise Sonier** have planned a trip to France, their first trip overseas in a long time. They will have to dust off their French! **Nancy** and **Joe Calme** took a train trip to New Orleans in March and plan to float in an English canal boat with their grandchildren in April.

Covid continues to affect many people in and around UCC. Please join the service from home if you are feeling under the weather. And be careful when out in public and consider masking up when visiting crowded places.

Birthdays:

We get to celebrate eight April birthdays of our members and friends! 1 -**Barbara Bott**, 5 – **Stace Danielson**, 8 - **Kayle Rice**, 8- **Ryan Brozovich**, 12 - **Nancy Crowell**, 16– **Patti Ludvig-McCartney**, 16- **Kelin Michael**, 17- **Freya Lake**

Welcome Visitors:

We were delighted to welcome first-time visitors **Paralee Harris**, **William Chapman**, **Ursula Chapman-Larson**, **Andrew Larson**, **Magnolia Larson**, **Denise VanDyken**, **Gail Innis**, and the **Marquez Family: Astrid, Sabastian, Aiko, and Asher**. We hope to see you again soon!

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



LEADERSHIP



The Board of Trustees met on March 6. Here are a few of the things they accomplished:

- Reviewed the **proposed budget** for the 2024/2025 church year
- Voted to allow Open House Theatre Company a **page on the UCC website**.
- Authorized the UCC Sustainability Group to request a preliminary engineering assessment from Solar Faithful for possible **solar panels on the building**.
- Decided to not take any action on a **name change** for UCC at this time.

Click [HERE](#) to read the minutes from the March meeting. The next regular Board meeting will take place via Zoom on **Wednesday, April 17 at 6:30 PM**. The Board plans to go into **closed session** for the first 45 minutes of the meeting to discuss staff compensation. **Visitors are welcome to attend after 7:15 PM**. The Zoom link can be found on the UU Community Church [online calendar](#).

April Generosity Giving

Our Generosity Sunday recipient for April is [Community Homeworks](#). Founded in 2009, Community Homeworks has a goal of closing the gaps in post-purchase support for low income homeowners in Kalamazoo County.

Community Homeworks' programs are designed to help keep people in their homes and develop homeowner self-sufficiency while ensuring that their homes are safe, decent and sustainable. They provide a comprehensive package of solutions for making housing affordable, comfortable, and secure including critical home repairs and education workshops on home maintenance and repairs.

There are several ways to give to our special collection for Community Homeworks.

- You can place a check made out to UCC with Generosity Sunday the memo in the offering basket anytime in April. 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 **April 14** to Community Homeworks.

Also on April 14, we will be joined by **Chris Praedel**, the Executive Director of Community Homeworks for some firsthand insight into their mission and programs.

Supporting our Generosity Sunday recipients is one way we live our UU values in the world. If it is yours to do, please consider giving generously to our special collection for Community Homeworks. Wouldn't it be amazing if 10 UCC folks committed to contributing \$100 each? What a powerful impact we could help to make in people's lives! We also encourage you to share information about this special collection to people you know. Anyone can contribute any amount.



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. Bring your voice to our next meeting on **April 14**. We will meet following a brief social time and you can participate either in person or on Zoom.

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

We enjoyed great Sunday Services in February from **Rev. Gy, Rabbi Simone Schicker**, and **Improv Effect (Dann and Tara Systma)**. **Drs. Bonnie and David Paul**, co-founders of the [Freedom to Choose Project](#) joined us for a insightful Thoughtful Thursday conversation. 27 people, many of them new to UUCC, attended the **February Renewal Retreat**. Many thanks for **Kathryn Ragains-Wilson, Eric Nelson**, and **Rev. Gy** for putting together such a wonderful program. We served as a collection site for the NAACP Community Baby Shower Drive and many UUCC folks stopped by to chat with the Kalamazoo branch president **Wendy Fields**. UUCC member **David Senecal** shared his delightful artwork on our Art Wall. And we hosted an additional 15 group meetings and activities during the month! Thanks to the hard work of our Growth Team—**Rev. Gy, Darby Fetzer, Eric Nelson, Deb Warner, and Miriam**—our email database and social media audiences are growing and helping us to share the good news about Unitarian Universalism to the wider world. Together we can do great things!

We learned about many upcoming **OPPORTUNITIES** at our March meeting including:

Help Each Other Survey—Everyone is encouraged to take the survey to help foster stronger relationships and build a more resilient community at UUCC! Click [HERE](#) to get started.

Filling out the survey is not a commitment of any kind! This is just the beginning of a dialog.

The team plans to follow up with a Skills Survey so those in need of help can find those who are willing to provide assistance. If you have any questions, contact **Marsha Laya** or **Nancy Calme**.

ISAAC Community Organizing Workshop -UUCC will host a community organizing training session with Rev. Catoya Roberts for ISAAC family and friends on **April 7** from **1-6 PM**. Registration for this event is now closed.

Annual Meeting of the Congregation - The Annual Meeting is planned for **June 9** at **11:15 AM**.

- If you are not yet a member and would like to vote at the annual meeting, please make plans to sign the membership book before **May 9** to be eligible to vote. Contact Miriam for more information about the Path to Membership.
- The Nominating Committee will announce its slate of candidates for leadership positions in the May newsletter. **Members may also make nominations in writing** to the Secretary of the Board. These must be received by **May 26**. No nominations may be made from the floor.
- The Board will hold an onsite and online **Budget Roundtable** on **May 5** at **11:20 AM** to answer any questions you might have about the proposed budget.
- If you have any questions about the Annual Meeting contact Board president, Steve Tasko.

The next Program Council Meeting is coming up this **Sunday, April 14** at around **11:20 AM**.

Please plan to join us and help keep UUCC's programs going strong! If you have any questions about Program Council, or items to add to the agenda, contact Eric Nelson (ericvnelson1@gmail.com)

LEARNING AND GROWTH

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST COMMUNITY CHURCH

THOUGHTFUL THURSDAYS

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.



April 18: The Power of Native Plants with Mike Weis

Join us on April 18 for our Earth Day themed, Thoughtful Thursday, ***Harnessing Power of Native Plants: Healing Nature in Your Own Backyard.***

Our guest speaker, **Mike Weis**, the owner of Kalamazoo-based landscape company, [Dropseed! Native Gardens and Ecological Restoration](#) will guide us through the transformative potential of native plants. In a world where pristine natural habitats are vanishing at an alarming rate, it's crucial to explore alternative avenues for conservation and restoration. Mike will delve into the significance of native plants in enhancing the earth's capacity to support both people and wildlife.

Click [HERE](#) to register for the Zoom link for this gathering or visit tinyurl.com/LetsGoNative

May 9: Compassion & Choices



At our May Thoughtful Thursday, we will be joined by a representative from [Compassion & Choices](#) who will speak to us about end-of-life issues including advanced directives, dementia, medical-aid-in-dying, and more.

Compassion & Choices' mission is to improve care, expand options, and empower everyone to chart their end-of-life journey. Their vision is a society that affirms life and accepts the inevitability of death, embraces expanded options for compassionate dying and empowers everyone to choose end-of-life care that reflects their values, priorities, and beliefs.

Click [HERE](#) to register for the Zoom link for this gathering or visit tinyurl.com/uccccompassionandchoices

June and July: We will take a break from Thoughtful Thursdays in June and July. Our speakers series will return in August 2024 with more thought-provoking topics and interesting guest for you to enjoy!

CONNECTION



Women's Book Group

Friday, April 12
1 PM via Zoom

April Selection:
Women in White Coats
By Olivia Campbell

From Goodreads:
In the early 1800s, women were dying in large numbers from

treatable diseases because they avoided receiving medical care. Examinations performed by male doctors were often demeaning and even painful. In addition, women faced stigma from illness--a diagnosis could greatly limit their ability to find husbands, jobs or be received in polite society.

Motivated by personal loss and frustration over inadequate medical care, Elizabeth Blackwell, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson and Sophia Jex-Blake fought for a woman's place in the male-dominated medical field. For the first time ever, Women in White Coats tells the complete history of these three pioneering women who, despite countless obstacles, earned medical degrees and paved the way for other women to do the same. Though very different in personality and circumstance, together these women built women-run hospitals and teaching colleges--creating for the first time medical care for women by women.

The Book Group meets at 1 PM on April 12 for a short business meeting and a discussion of the book led by Stephanie Grathwol. 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!

1st Saturday Game Gathering



The April 1st Saturday Game Gathering has been CANCELED due to a conflict with the Stewardship Celebration. The next Game Gathering will be on **May 4 at 3 PM.**

Qigong at UCC

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

Qigong is an ancient Chinese practice that combines gentle stretching, self-massage, and deep breathing. We engage in the practice with our mics and cameras off so you do not need to feel self-conscious at all. **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 **April 20 at 9:00 AM** at Garcia's Mexican Kitchen located right next door to UCC.

The Breakfast Group "regulars" would love to have YOU join them for good food and conversation.

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 aren't having breakfast alone.

Ron's contact info is ronald.crowell@wmich.edu

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

In honor of Earth Month, our 8th Principle resource comes from Rev. Bob Murphy of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tarpon Springs, Florida. His blog post explores the intersection of environmental activism, anti-racism, and our Unitarian Universalist values. Rev. Murphy writes:

The environmental justice movement starts with human rights concerns. It addresses the most basic of human needs. Including the right to breathe, the right to an adequate supply of safe drinking water, the right to shelter, and the right to protection from toxic substances. These basic rights and needs are identified with human physiology and with the need for public health and safety.

Environmental justice advocates ask, "Who tries to control natural resources and for what purpose? Who speaks for justice?" These are ancient questions that have new significance in an age of advanced technology and global pollution.

The environmental justice movement "speaks truth to power and privilege."

The environmental justice movement has developed from the experience of African-Americans, Native Americans, low-income whites, and other people, who have often been oppressed, or simply ignored, as conversations about environmental problems and environmental protection have evolved.

Environmental Justice was the first major Unitarian Universalist statement to address the need for environmental justice. This 1994 General Resolution begins by noting: "We affirm justice and compassion in human relations, the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and respect for the interdependent web of all existence." The General Resolution also says, "The concept of environment justice links the principles of liberal religion with the values of ecological awareness and racial and class justice."

If you seek grounding.... An awareness of "the interdependent web of existence" may be the foundation for Unitarian Universalist thinking in the 21st century. Our seventh principle is popular and often mentioned. However: All of the Unitarian Universalist principles are connected and all of the principles matter. The moral solution for the climate change problem, and for other environmental problems, requires some emphasis on human rights and dignity. We want to live in the right relationships with all people and with all of the natural world.



The UUC **Exploring Anti-Racism Group** will meet via Zoom at **7 PM on Tuesday, April 23**. All are welcome to join this group as your schedule allows. This month, the group will reflect on one of the questions posed in ***Me and White Supremacy*** by Layla Saad.

Click [HERE](#) to join the Zoom Meeting ID 269 324 7262. If you have any questions about this small group, please contact Eric Nelson.

SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

Small Groups at UUCC are a great way to deepen your relationship with the church community and our Unitarian Universalist faith. Newcomers and visitors are always welcome to participate!

Civil Conversations Group

Our Civil Conversation Small Group led by Darby Fetzer meets on Zoom once a month to practice Emotional Intelligence skills and learn to build bridges toward greater understanding in the world through thoughtful conversation.

Each session starts with a review of what it takes to have a civil conversation and an opportunity to share personal successes and failures we have experienced recently as we have tried to engage with people with different world views than our own. Then, participants are given a chance to practice conversation skills by tackling a challenging topic.



The next meeting of the Civil Conversations Group is on **Thursday, April 25** at **7 PM**. Click [HERE](#) to register or visit tinyurl.com/uuCivilConvosApril

Spiritual Growth Group

The UUCC Spiritual Growth Discussion Group led by Rev. Gy will embark on a 9-month long exploration of the book ***Extraordinary Leadership*** by Dr. Roberta M. Gilbert. The group will explore systems thinking, unearth unconscious behaviors that no longer serve, and explore new ways of healthy relationships with self and others.

The group will meet once a month on the 4th Wednesday. Participants will be paired in to work through specific issues. Participants will also have every month a 45-minute group session with Rev. Gy.

Given the structure of the class and the subject matter, this will be a **closed small group**. The first session will be on **April 24** at **7 PM**. After that date, no one else may join. Please consider join this small group. Contact Rev. Gy to reserve your spot: gyludvig@gmail.com

Sustainability Group

Members of the UUCC Sustainability Group meet at **7:00 PM** via Zoom on the **3rd Monday** of each month to reflect on their sustainability journeys, to share their successes and failures, and to explore ideas about how to live more gently on the Earth. Newcomers are always welcome to join this group as their schedule allows.

The group will kick off their annual **30-Day Sustainability Challenge** in April.



If you get our newsletter, you should receive the challenge in your inbox each Monday morning between **April 22 and May 20**. In the emails, there will be things to read, listen to, watch, and do that will inspire you to live more gently on the Earth. You don't need to do everything on the list! To paraphrase Anne Marie Bonneau, the Zero Waste Chef, we don't need a handful of people doing sustainable practices perfectly. We need millions of people doing it imperfectly.



The next Sustainability Group meeting is on **Monday, April 15**. Join us to talk about solar panel, plant-based dining, and Electric Vehicles! Click [HERE](#) to join Zoom Meeting ID 960 9812 1445.

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. Nicky will also do a deep dive into the sources of Green House Gas (GHG) emissions by sector. She begins with Agriculture.

Climate Change - The Impact of Agriculture

Agriculture encompasses land use. It may be animal husbandry, forestry, or crops. In the United States, agriculture accounts for approximately 10% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. This is the smallest sector.

One of the reasons that agriculture has the least emissions is, it is also a carbon sink sector. If you cut down a tree you can replace it by planting a tree. It is not a one for one equation since it takes a while for a growing tree to be up to speed, but the new tree is an offset and if more trees are planted then cut, forestry may act as a carbon sink. This is also true for regenerative farming, and careful management of our National Parks, Forest, Dunes, etc.

The two biggest sources of GHGs in agriculture are monoculture crops and animals. In the US there are approximately: 1.5 billion chickens, 87.2 million cattle, 75 million pigs, 6.5 million turkeys, 5 million sheep, and 2.5 million goats. Animal manure releases methane, nitrogen oxide, and ammonia into the air. Ruminants, (cows, sheep, goats, and buffalo) produce large volumes of methane. Methane is 25x more powerful than carbon dioxide for GHG emissions.

Another problem with animals is land. The number one reason for deforestation of the Amazon rainforest is to create space to raise and feed cattle for the fast food industry. This deforestation is changing the Amazon from a carbon sink to a carbon producer.

Large industrial farms are mostly monoculture farm. Monoculture does not replenish the soil the way crop rotation and farrowing did. The only way to sustain the soil is through massive quantities of fertilizer, with one of their main ingredients being nitrogen, which becomes nitrogen oxide when released into the air, 100x more potent as a GHG than carbon dioxide. Fertilizer doesn't stay put where you spray it. It dissipates into the air as well as being absorbed into the ground. When the rains come, this fertilizer is washed into the various waterways polluting as it goes downstream and evaporating into the air. In the air it is a greenhouse gas.

99% of synthetic chemicals are derived from fossil fuels. This includes pesticides. So not only are pesticides unhealthy to consume, their manufacturing releases GHG 10 times the emissions of manufacturing nitrogen fertilizer. ([More on page 13](#))



SUSTAINABILITY

This is why regenerative, multicultural farming is necessary. The soil, with all its microbial fungi, is vital to healthy crops. Healthy soil doesn't require fertilizer. The soil remains fertile through the rotation of crops and ground cover.

Our forestry efforts are mostly monoculture also. When trees are harvested and new ones planted, the new trees are usually a fast growing money crop such as pine. So healthy culturally mixed forests become monocultural sterile areas.

What can an individual family do when we are talking about large industrial farms? This is always the question that makes people feel defeated. I'm just one person so I can't make a difference. But that's not really true. It's like that long journey that started with a single step. Do what you can and what you want, and maybe someone (your child, your friend, your unknown neighbor) will see and say "I can do that too".

One of the easiest changes an individual can make, and apparently one of the most difficult psychologically, is to become vegetarian. Cooking as a vegetarian doesn't cost more, doesn't require more time, and it can help reduce the number of farmed animals. There is a learning curve when trying to figure out meat substitutes such as lentils and tofu. If you get a couple of cook books there's a lot of variety. Some people simply start by celebrating meatless Monday.

Animal husbandry, in this country, has become a study in animal cruelty. If you don't give up meat, try to buy locally, know the source of your meat, and who processed it. The same is true of your vegetables. Where were they grown? If you are financially able, support your local farmers at the Farmers Market. Ask if they use fertilizer or pesticides. Are they organic or not? You can join a CSA such as DeLano Farm at the Nature Center. If you can, grow your own. Our church now has a composter so you can exchange your scraps for good compost! You can also get an indoor garden with LED grow lights.

Another thing you can do is asve a tree! Use both sides of your printer paper. Don't throw away any one-sided paper - use the other side for your recipe book or anything you just want to save for yourself. I have one friend who only buys Kindle books to save paper. When possible, buy recycled paper products. Work with your local government establishing a "cut a tree, plant a tree" program, so every tree lost during a development project is replaced somewhere local.

Do what you can, what you enjoy, and occasionally throw in a letter to your Representatives to help bring about the systemic change that is really needed to combat climate change. Visit [usa.gov/elected-officials/](https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials/) to get started.

Sincerely,

Nicky

nickyleigh1226@gmail.com

Sources:

<https://countinganimals.com/how-many-animals-does-a-vegetarian-save/>

<https://awionline.org/content/inhumane-practices-factory-farms>

https://www.panda.org/discover/knowledge_hub/where_we_work/amazon/amazon_threats/unsustainable_cattle_ranching/



CELEBRATE EARTH MONTH



Celebrate Earth Day 2024 with local groups that are rooted in action. Bring your family and friends and help clean up Kalamazoo neighborhoods, plant trees, prepare community gardens, get outdoors, and enjoy great local music and food.

Schedule of Events:

April 7: **Reforest the Vine**

April 13: **Northside Neighborhood Clean-Up**

April 20: **Edison Community Gardens Prep**

April 20: **Vine Neighborhood Clean-Up & Celebration**

April 21: **Children's Festival**

April 22: **UpJohn Park Guided Bird Walk**

Visit kalamazooearthday.com for event details.

Celebrate Earth Day at the KNC

Enjoy FREE admission to Kalamazoo Nature Center's Visitor Center, trails, and exhibits all day on **Saturday, April 20**. Celebrate the first signs of spring and check out the exciting line-up of programs happening throughout the day. Dance, drum, eat, ride, paddle, learn, hike and create in celebration of our planet! Learn more at: naturecenter.org/programs/earthday/



EPS Foam Recycling and More

Next date: Saturday, April 20
10:00 AM to 1:00 PM

Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) foam, electronics, and oral care recycling is available in Kalamazoo once every quarter. Residents can drop off any amount of the accepted materials during collection times. Paper shredding is also available. Volunteers will be set up in the parking lots of Mayors' Riverfront Park from 10 AM to 1 PM on collection days. Visit the [City of Kalamazoo website](#) to learn more about what items are accepted.

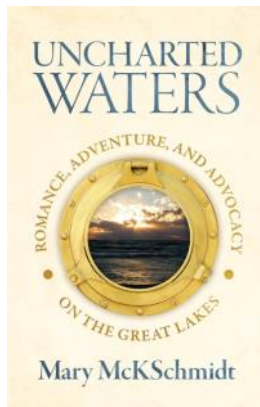
Rain Barrel & Composter Sale

The City of Battle Creek is partnering with Upcycle Products for a **Rain Barrel and Composter Fundraiser** to benefit the [Battle Creek Area Clean Water Partnership](#).

Visit upcycle-products.com/mi-programs/bc/ and place your order either online by April 14 or by mail by April 8. A portion of your purchase will be donated to the Partnership.

Items must be picked up on April 17 from 4—6 PM at the Battle Creek Department of Public Works at 150 S Kendall St. in Battle Creek.

A Lake Michigan Love Song



Using her memoir **Uncharted Waters** as a jumping off point, Michigan author Mary McKSchmidt will talk about the importance of caring for water in general and Lake Michigan in particular. At the Portage United Church of Christ on **April 24** at **3 PM**. All are welcome!

RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION

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

Since January, the kids at UCC have been exploring our shared Unitarian Universalist values with the help of Legos. Legos are those little, colorful, plastic, interlocking, building blocks that have been sparking youthful imagination and productivity since 1949. Our lessons in “Lego Theology” have been a big hit with our young folk and quite a bit of fun for our adult volunteers as well. So far, we have completed Lego “challenges” about Love, Cooperation, Kindness, Listening, Curiosity, Courage, Pluralism, and Luck. I am grateful to my colleague, Kathy E. Smith, Director of Family Ministry at the Unitarian Church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana for sharing her ideas for “Lego ValUUs” on which our lesson plans have taken inspiration.

As we embark on a month of exploring interdependence, some adults in the congregation might gain inspiration from Legos as well. After all, Legos, like people, come in a wide range of shapes, colors, and sizes but they are not meant to exist all alone. Legos pieces are meant to combine with other pieces to create something bigger. They are made to be connected to each other.

With Legos, as with life as we work to build a just a sustainable Beloved Community, the possibilities are endless if we apply our imagination and creativity. And, as with Legos and life, we can dismantle and rebuild if we find ourselves heading in the wrong direction. Sometimes the dismantling and rebuilding can be frustrating and difficult, but it can also be joyful, fun, and oh-so-satisfying when we build something that is just right.

I am told that Lego is Danish for “play well” and that just might be a good mantra for Unitarian Universalists of all ages as we journey though this life.

May it be so!



APRIL RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION SCHEDULE

DATE	LESSON	VOLUNTEERS
April 7	Lego ValUUs	Regena and Eric Nelson
April 14	Lego ValUUs	Isaac Epskamp-Hunt
April 21	Lego ValUUs	Pat Timm
April 28	Lego ValUUs	Mary Roscoe



OPPORTUNITIES

Spring Mindfulness Retreat

Saturday, April 13
9:30 AM - 2:30 PM

Join us for a FREE half-day mindfulness meditation retreat with Eric Nelson.

UCC SANCTUARY | 10441 SHAVER ROAD | PORTAGE, MI

REGISTER AT:
[TINYURL.COM/MINDFULSPRING](https://tinyurl.com/mindfulspring)

As we transition into the spring season, you are invited to UCC's Spring Mindfulness Retreat on Saturday, April 13 from 9:30 AM to 2:30 PM. Hosted by Eric Nelson this retreat will provide a welcoming environment for self-reflection and renewal.

You will engage in mindfulness practices tailored to the season, such as Gentle Movement, Mindful Breathing, Reflective Meditation, and Cultivating Inner Harmony. These practices are designed to help you find balance and growth as you embrace the energy of spring.

Please bring your lunch. We'll provide coffee and tea to keep you refreshed throughout the retreat.

Spaces are limited. Click [HERE](#) to ensure your place or visit tinyurl.com/mindfulspring



*Trees whisper and sway,
Leaves rustling in the wind's song,
Nature is alive.*



Save the Date for **Open House Theatre Company's** next production—

A Selection of One-Act Plays About Aging

The production will include:

Continuum of Care

by Art and Deborah Johnson

Freda

A new play by Daniel Smith

When: May 17, 18, and 19

Where: 10441 Shaver Road in Portage

Ticket information will be coming soon! To learn more about the company and how to get involved behind the scenes or on the stage, visit [Open House Theatre Company](#).



Euchre Night

Larry and Carol Higgins will host a Euchre Night at UCC on Friday, **April 12**, from **6:00-8:30 PM**. This is a Service Auction event but

EVERYONE is invited to join the fun.

Here is the scoop:

- No partners are needed.
- All skill levels are welcome.
- "Fabulous" prizes will be awarded to the top three players.
- Some snacks and soft drinks will be provided.
- You can bring a beverage of your choice and/or snack to share.
- A \$10 donation to UCC would be appreciated but not necessary.



APRIL 2024



DAY	DATE	EVENT	TIME
Tuesday	April 2	Qigong Drop-In Mindfulness Practice with Eric	9:00 AM 7:00 PM
Thursday	April 4	Stewardship Committee Meeting	1:00 PM
Saturday	April 6	Qigong The Magic of Community Stewardship Celebration	9:00 AM 5:00 PM
Sunday	April 7	Global Swarming with Rev. Gy and UU Exploration for Kids After-Service Social Time ISAAC Community Organizing Workshop	10:00 AM 11:00 AM 1:00 PM
Tuesday	April 9	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	April 10	Sunday Services Committee Meeting	5:30 PM
Friday	April 12	Women's Book Group Euchre Tournament	1:00 PM 6:00 PM
Saturday	April 13	Qigong Mindfulness Retreat with Eric	9:00 AM 9:30 PM
Sunday	April 14	The Great Divide with Rev. Gy and UU Exploration for Kids After-Service Social Time/Souper Sunday Program Council Meeting	10:00 AM 11:00 AM 11:20 AM
Monday	April 15	Sustainability Group	7:00 PM
Tuesday	April 16	Qigong Drop in Mindfulness Practice with Eric	9:00 AM 7:00 PM
Wednesday	April 17	Board of Trustees Meeting—Closed Session Board of Trustees Meeting—Open Meeting	6:30 PM 7:15 PM
Thursday	April 18	Thoughtful Thursday with Mike Weis	7:00 PM
Saturday	April 20	Qigong 3rd Saturday Breakfast Group Kalamazoo Earth Day Celebration	9:00 AM 9:00 AM 2:00 PM
Sunday	April 21	Earth Day Sunday: Voices of Youth and UU Exploration for Kids After-Service Social Time	10:00 AM 11:00 AM
Monday	April 22	EARTH DAY UUCS 30-Day Sustainability Challenge Begins	Everyday 6:00 AM
Tuesday	April 23	Qigong Exploring Anti-Racism Group	9:00 AM 7:00 PM
Wednesday	April 24	NEWSLETTER DEADLINE Spiritual Growth Group	12:00 PM 7:00 PM
Thursday	April 24	Civil Conversations Group	7:00 PM
Saturday	April 27	Qigong	9:00 AM
Sunday	April 28	Bee Joyful with Jessica Thompson and UU Exploration for Kids After-Service Social Time	10:00 AM 11:00 AM
Tuesday	April 30	Qigong	9:00 AM

**UU Community Church
is served by:**

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2023-2024 Board of Trustees

Steve Tasko

Eric Nelson

Pat Timm

Marsha Laya

Mike Graham

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

Please send submissions to:

uuccnewsletter@gmail.com

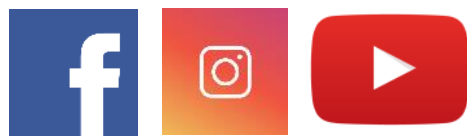
CommUnity Matters

**Unitarian Universalist Community Church
of Southwest Michigan**

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