



# CommUUunity Matters

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest Michigan

May 2024

## MAY SUNDAY SERVICES

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

### May 5: *What is Hope?*

#### with Rev. Gy

Hope is more than a feeling. It is both the waiting we do and the actions we take. It is courage and creativity. It is sometimes terrible struggle but also an essential part of transformation and change.

Zoom Meeting ID: 949 3555 3339. Click [HERE](#) to register.

### May 12: *Flower Communion*

#### with Rev. Gy

The first Flower Communion, led by Unitarian minister Rev. Norbert Čapek, was held in Prague in the spring of 1923. We join UUs from all over the world to celebrate this beloved tradition and honor its powerful history. Be sure to bring a flower to place in our community vase if you plan to attend the onsite service.

Zoom Meeting ID: 937 0202 9266 Click [HERE](#) to register.

### May 19: *Leaps of Faith*

#### with Rev. Gy

Join Rev. Gy for an exploration of optimism, inspiration, leaps of faith, and how we can learn to live our values by responding from love rather than reacting in fear.

Zoom Meeting ID: 987 7978 4114 Click [HERE](#) to register.

### May 26: *Building the Beloved Community— One Conversation at a Time*

#### with the UUCC Civil Conversations Group

Join the Civil Conversations Group for an opportunity to practice emotional intelligence skills and to learn how to build bridges toward greater understanding in the world through thoughtful conversation.

Zoom Meeting ID: 950 3380 0355 Click [HERE](#) to register.



## Spiritual Theme for May SOWING SEEDS

During the course of this church year, we are taking inspiration for our spiritual explorations from the Tree of Life. As the weather turns warm and many UUCC folks begin to think of gardens and planting, let's turn our attention to the thousand of seeds the Tree of Life produces.

The poet Mary Oliver wrote:

*Seeds—little miracles  
Each carrying a universe within  
Waiting to bloom, grow, and thrive  
In the fertile soil of possibility*

And, Henry David Thoreau proclaimed:

*I have great faith in a seed. Wherever you have  
planted a seed, I am prepared to expect wonders.*

Seeds seem to inspire hope and optimism in even the most cynical of hearts. After all, each towering and majestic tree on earth once started out as a tiny seed. What can be more miraculous than that?

Questions to ponder this month:

*What inspires you?*

*What makes you hopeful?*

*What seeds of possibility, transformation, or change  
do you want to plant in the world?*

*What must you do to help the seeds you plant  
bloom, grow, and thrive?*

# FROM THE MINISTER



## From the Minister [Rev. Gy Ludvig-McCartney](#)

Recently I was inspired by a poem that was written for a Transgender Day of Visibility. It did so much good to my heart to read these words especially because so often I focus on what's broken, on where the need is, on injustices and injuries against people and, yes, animals too, whose lives and voices matter little to the powerful. Then I read this poem and it helped me remember that there is wholeness too. I want you to read it and tell me if it helps you too.

### ***Wholeness by Sharon Wylie***

*We speak so often of brokenness in religious life,*

*Let us speak today of wholeness.*

*You are welcome here, all of you*

*Every part of you beautiful just the way you are*

*Here you do not need to be something more or something less*

*No holding back, no hiding*

*No exerting yourself, no trying to do more or be more*

*You have inherent worth and dignity*

*Nothing to prove here,*

*Nothing to prove to me or the person sitting next to you or to the children or to anyone*

*You don't have to try and be witty or more quiet or more outgoing*

*You are beautiful; every part of you beautiful just the way you are*

*You do not need to change anything about yourself to be welcome here:*

*Your skin, your hair, your belly, your limbs, your face—*

*All beautiful just the way they are*

*You are extraordinary*

*Each and every one of you different from each and beautiful in your own beautiful way,*

*Breathtaking.*

*Let us worship together!*



# ANNUAL MEETING

## Annual Meeting News

In accordance with its by-laws, the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest Michigan will hold an Annual Meeting of the Congregation on **Sunday, June 9, 2024 at 11:15 AM.**

The meeting agenda, the final proposed budget, the slate of candidates, and any other relevant documents will be emailed to you on Friday, May 24. If you need paper copies of these, please contact the office and Miriam will mail them to you. There will also be a few paper copies available at the Welcome Desk on and after May 26.

The Annual Meeting will be a hybrid gathering with members in good standing who signed the membership book before May 9, 2024, able to vote onsite or via Zoom for candidates for the board and nominating committee, to approve the budget, and on any other matters of business brought to the floor. There shall be no voting absentee by proxy, by email, by postal mail, or by facsimile. Childcare will be available for those who need it

The 2023-2024 UUCM Nominating Committee, (Judy Pigg-Behrendt and Kimberly Ridley) have selected two members to be nominated for two-year terms on the Board of Trustees. The nominees will be replacing outgoing Trustees Marsha Laya and Pat Timm. These appointments shall be approved by a vote of the members at the annual meeting.

The nominees for a 2-year term are:



**Patricia Fuehr**



**Kathryn Ragains-Wilson**

The Nominating Committee is very grateful to these members for agreeing to serve the congregation in leadership roles. In accordance with the by-laws, additional nominations for the Board of Trustees may be submitted by any member or group of members, two weeks in advance of the annual meeting by furnishing the name of the proposed nominee or nominees, in writing, to the Secretary of the Board of Trustees. A member may also self-nominate. Nominations will close two (2) weeks prior to the annual meeting and there will be no nominations from the floor.

In preparation for the Annual Meeting, members of the Board of Trustees and Finance Team will host a **Budget Q&A Roundtable** on **Sunday, May 5** at approximately **11:20 AM** to answer any questions you might have about the budget. This meeting will take place onsite and online in the same Zoom room as our Sunday Service. Childcare is available for onsite participants.

If you have any questions about the Annual Meeting or the Budget Q&A Roundtable, please contact Board President Steve Tasko ([stevetasko@gmail.com](mailto:stevetasko@gmail.com) or 269-330-4559)

# STEWARDSHIP

Thank you to everyone who came to our Celebration of Generosity on April 6. We enjoyed good food, great company, and a delightful magic show presented by Evan D. Priem that amazed even some of the more skeptical UUs among us. The stewardship committee is pleased to announce the 2024-2025 pledge total of \$110,560! They are continually amazed by YOUR ongoing generosity and support for the mission of this church. Please know that everyone's contributions to our church, in all forms, are valued! Thank you for all YOU do and give to our beloved Unitarian Universalist Community.



# CARING COMMUNITY



## MAY CARING COMMUNITY NEWS

*May is the month of expectation, the month of wishes, the month of hope.*

— Emily Brontë

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

Our thoughts and prayers are with **Stace Danielson, Joel Folkert, Rev. Gy** and **Patti** who suffered losses of beloved family members this month. We also hold those suffering from illness and injury in our hearts including **Chris Petersmark** who is recovering from a torn ligament in his thumb and **Ken Kurtz** who has struggled with several bouts of pneumonia over the last few months.



We celebrate with our UUCC Spring Graduates! **Chris Petersmark** received a Master of Fine Arts degree from Western Michigan University and **David Brozovich** has completed an Associate of Arts from Kalamazoo Valley Community College. We will have to wait until next month to see the pictures, but **Matthew Nelson** will receive his Bachelor of Science from Kalamazoo College this spring as well. Congratulations to all our amazing scholars!



A belated congratulations goes out to our friend **Kayle Rice** who was married to **Michael Boyer** back in October.

### **Happy Birthday!**

Wish a very happy birthday to all who will celebrate in May including **5- Nick Tasko, 17-Denise Sonier, 20-David Brozovich, and 25-Larry Higgins**

### **Remembering Friends Who Have Passed On:**

Pause to remember three dear UUCC friends who passed away in the month of May in past years. **Harold Oliver** (Dec. 25, 1924 - May 24, 2012 ) **Joan Wallace** (Feb. 25, 1925 - May 15, 2015 ) and **Marjorie Snow** (Aug. 19, 1921 - May 4, 2016)

### **Welcome Visitors:**

We were delighted to welcome first-time visitors **Denise VanDyken, Jeremiah Otis, Carla Horton,** and **Maureen Wu** to UUCC in April. We hope to see you again soon! It warmed our hearts to have founding members **Bob** and **Barb McWhorter** join us again after being absent for so long. Come again soon! And, the Qigong group was treated to a visit from our dear friend and former member **Judy Oliver**, who moved to NJ several years ago. Life is good!

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

# LEADERSHIP



The Board of Trustees met on April 17. Here are a few of the things they accomplished:

- Reviewed the **proposed budget** for the 2024/2025 church year
- Discussed staff compensation during a closed session.
- Received an update from UCC Sustainability Group about an engineering assessment from Solar Faithful for possible **solar panels on the building**.

Click [HERE](#) to read the minutes from the April meeting. The next regular Board meeting will take place via Zoom on **Wednesday, May 1 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](#).



## Transaction editing is easier than ever!

Vanco Online users can now edit their transactions. They simply log in to their account, view Scheduled Transactions, and click Edit to change any of the following giving criteria:

- Amount
- Frequency
- Associated tile/fund
- Start and end date
- Associated payment method

**Vanco Update:** You can now edit the amount of your recurring payments made through Vanco. Previously, you had to end your recurring payment and set up a new recurring payment. If you have any questions, you can contact a Vanco customer service representative at 1-800-675-7430.

Not using our online giving platform yet? You can download the free Vanco Mobile app from Google Play or Apple's App Store to your smartphone or tablet at anytime and look for Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest MI. You can also give online on the church website by clicking on the "donate" button in the middle of the page.

**General Assembly** is the annual gathering of Unitarian Universalists. During the three-day event, UUs from all over the country and the world will conduct the business of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), explore the theological underpinnings of our faith, and lean fully into our mission and principles. This year's General Assembly will take place **100% virtually on June 20-23** and will feature a historic vote that may change the way we articulate our share values to the world.

Each UU congregation in good standing gets to send voting delegates to General Assembly and UCC is looking for volunteers. If you are interested in helping to craft policy for the UUA and have a schedule flexible enough to allow you to attend multiple business sessions over the course of three days, please contact a member of the Board today. For more information about General Assembly visit [uua.org/ga](http://uua.org/ga).

**VIRTUAL  
GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY**  
JUNE 20 - 23, 2024



# PROGRAM COUNCIL



## Program Council—Where TOGETHER—We Get Stuff Done!

Everyone - members, friends, visitors—is invited to help create programming at UU Community Church by attending our Program Council Meetings.

Our final Program Council Meeting of the church year was on April 12. It was a great meeting with much laughter. And, we had much to **CELEBRATE!**

We enjoyed some wonderful Sunday services in March from **Rev. Gy** and local quilter **Pamela Chapman**. Having Pam's beautiful quilts hanging in our sanctuary for a couple of weeks was an added bonus! **Dr. Omid Safi** of Duke University joined us for Thoughtful Thursday and shared his vision for compassion and justice to work together to heal the ongoing war and humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Ten folks attended our watch party for the ISAAC "Me and White Supremacy" event with author Layla Saad and committed to take steps to dismantle white supremacy culture in our community. **UUCC kids** had wonderful time searching for 72 eggs hidden in the basement on Easter Sunday! We hosted an ISAAC Leadership Training with **Rev. Catoya Roberts**. Seventeen people attended the Euchre Night hosted by **Larry and Carol Higgins**. **Eric Nelson** led a successful Spring Mindfulness Retreat that brought several new folks to the UUCC building. And, we hosted an additional 13 group meetings and activities! Together, we are doing amazing things!

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



**Kalamazoo Pride Celebration on Saturday, June 8 from 12-5 PM.** If you are interested in volunteering for a shift at the UUCC table or helping organize this effort, please talk to Joe Calme or Miriam.



**Get Out the Vote 2024:** Our justice partners at [Interfaith Strategies for Advocacy and Action in the Community](#) (ISAAC) have received a grant to do **Get Out the Vote** activities in Kalamazoo County ahead of the November 2024 election. There will be lots of opportunities to phone and text bank and canvas door-to-door. Watch the weekly email for more information.



**Budget Roundtable: On Sunday, May 5,** there will be an opportunity to go over the proposed budget for the 2024-2025 church year before the annual meeting. You should have already received a copy of the proposed budget via email. If you need a paper copy, there will be a few at the welcome desk or you can contact the office and we will mail you one.



**Generosity Sunday 2020/2025:** It is time to start thinking about our Generosity Sunday recipients for next church year! If you have any ideas you would like the Program Council to consider, please send them to Miriam. We will be discussing this at our next Program Council Meeting.

Our next meeting is in AUGUST! Program Council will be replaced by the Budget Roundtable in May and by the Annual Meeting in June. There will be no meeting in July. Thank you to everyone who has participated in Program Council this year! We look forward to seeing you next church year!

# LEARNING AND GROWTH

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST COMMUNITY CHURCH

## THOUGHTFUL THURSDAYS



Our final Thoughtful Thursday of the church year, ***Choosing Dignity: Navigating Your End-of-Life Journey*** will take place on **May 9 at 7 PM** via Zoom. It will feature presentation by **Elaine Pereira**, an Outreach Ambassador for [Compassion & Choices](#).

This event promises to be a thought-provoking and engaging interactive conversation that explores crucial choices we can make to ensure a dignified end-of-life journey.

Compassion & Choices is dedicated to improving care, expanding options, and empowering everyone to chart their end-of-life journey. Their vision is a society that embraces expanded options for compassionate dying and empowers individuals to choose care aligned with their values.



Here's what you can expect to learn from this interactive event:

- ***Medical Landscape in Michigan***: Gain insights into the specific medical landscape of our state.
- ***Advance Directives***: Understand the critical importance of completing advance directives.
- ***Dementia Tools Forms***: Explore recently updated tools and forms related to dementia.
- ***Medical Aid in Dying***: Learn about what medical aid in dying is and what it is not.
- ***Take Action***: Discover how you can be informed and take action to control your end-of-life autonomy in Michigan.

We hope you will join us for an evening dedicated to ensuring that everyone is informed, empowered, and engaged in directing their end-of-life healthcare. Click [HERE](#) to register for the Zoom link or visit [tinyurl.com/uucccompassionandchoices](https://tinyurl.com/uucccompassionandchoices). We look forward to seeing you there!

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!



# OPEN HOUSE THEATRE

## Continuum of Care

*A One Act Play by Arnold Johnston and Deborah Ann Percy*



May 17-19  
Tickets \$15



**Open House Theatre Company**, the community theatre group that makes its home at Unitarian Universalist Community Church, is excited to present **CONTINUUM OF CARE: A One-Act Play by Arnold Johnston and Deborah Ann Percy**, produced and directed by **Mary Roscoe**. This award-winning play is an humorous and poignant exploration of aging and end-of-life issues.

Married playwrights Deborah Ann Percy and Arnold Johnston live in Kalamazoo and South Haven. Their individually and collaboratively written plays have won some 300 productions and readings on stage, screen, and radio, as well as numerous awards and publications across the country and internationally; and they've written, co-written, edited, or translated some twenty books, the latest of which is a collection of one-acts, *The Old Fart Plays*, forthcoming from Dramatic Publishing Company.

Performances will take place at **6 PM** on **May 17 and 18** and **2 PM** on Sunday, **May 19** and feature talented cast members **Dawn Renner, Matthew McCormick, Darby Fetzer, and Steve Tasko**.

### Ticket Information:

- All tickets are \$15.00
- To preorder you can send a check made out to UCC with OHTC Tickets and the performance date you want in the memo line to 10441 Shaver Road, Portage MI, 49024.
- You can also visit [tinyurl.com/OHTCTickets](https://tinyurl.com/OHTCTickets) to purchase tickets with a debit or credit card. Please be sure to put the performance date you want in the memo box.
- Tickets will also be available at the door.

If you have any questions, contact Artistic Director, Mary Roscoe at [lizoflynn@gmail.com](mailto:lizoflynn@gmail.com). To learn more about Open House Theatre Company, visit [ucommunitychurch.org/openhousetheatre](https://ucommunitychurch.org/openhousetheatre)

# CONNECTION

## Women's Book Group

Friday, May 10  
1 PM via Zoom

May Selection:  
**Melissa**  
By Alex Gino

From Wikipedia:

The children's novel **Melissa**, previously published as **George** until April 2022, written by American author Alex Gino is about a young transgender girl.

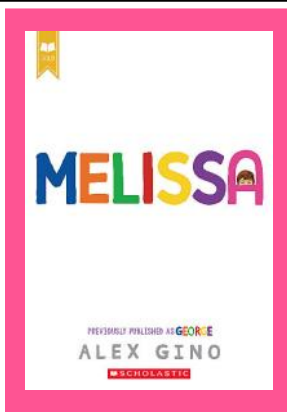
The novel tells the story of Melissa, a fourth-grade girl, who is struggling to be herself. The rest of the world sees Melissa as George, a boy. Melissa uses the class play, *Charlotte's Web*, to show her mother and the world that she is a girl by switching roles with her best friend, and playing the part of Charlotte.

The novel has received positive feedback from sources such as the *New York Times* and the *National Public Radio* for its inclusion of transgender experiences. However, the book has remained controversial to some parents and teachers, leading it to be listed on the American Library Association's list of the 10 Most Challenged Books of 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020.

The Book Group will at 1 PM on May 10 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](mailto:sargg.64@gmail.com)) if you have questions!

The Book Group will not meet again until July when they gather for their annual Summer Salad Potluck and Meeting, during which they will select next year's book selections.



## Qigong at UCC

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

### 5 Reasons to try Qigong at UCC

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

Click [HERE](#) for the **TUESDAY**

Zoom link. Meeting ID: 697  
338 090 Passcode: 138550

Click [HERE](#) for the **SATURDAY**

Zoom link. Meeting ID: 977  
5286 6838 Passcode: 383810

If you have any questions about the group, contact [Freya Lake](#).



## 3rd Saturday Breakfast Group

The UCC Breakfast Group will meet for breakfast on **May 18 at 9:00 AM** at Garcia's Mexican Kitchen located right next door to UCC.

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

Please RSVP to Ron ([ronald.crowell@wmich.edu](mailto:ronald.crowell@wmich.edu)) 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.

# 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!

## Sustainability Group

The UUCC Sustainability Group meets 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 the conversation!

One of the successes the Sustainability Group is celebrating this month is the **Community Compost Bin at UUCC!** Did you know that composting your food scraps in one of the ways that individuals can combat climate change? Whether it is a backyard bin or an industrial-scale operation, composting converts organic waste into sequestered soil carbon and averts methane emissions from landfills in the process. Our little bin (located at the back of the church) provides UUCC folks a convenient place to compost. Just bring your scraps to church and put them in the side of the bin that has a “+” on the door. That’s it! Composted soil is available in the tub next to the bin. Feel free to take some for your gardening projects. If you want to talk more about composting or other sustainability strategies, come to the next Sustainability Group meeting on May 20. Click [HERE](#) to join the Zoom meeting.

## Exploring Anti-Racism Group



The UUCC Exploring Anti-Racism Group will meet via Zoom at **7 PM on Thursday, May 30.**

All are welcome to join this group as your schedule allows.

Each session is a stand alone conversation.

At their May meeting, the group will reflect on some of the questions posed in the book ***Me and White Supremacy*** by Layla Saad. UUCC has been challenged by our justice partners at Interfaith Strategies for Advocacy and Action in the Community (ISAAC) to study this book and it would be wonderful if lots of UUCC folks took part in the discussions.

Examining how fear and discomfort may prevent us from doing meaningful work around anti-racism is essential if we want to be successful in building a Beloved Community that benefits us all. Please consider joining this monthly anti-racist conversation!

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



## 1st Saturday Game Gathering Group

The 1st Saturday Game Gathering will meet on Saturday, **March 4** from **3-6 PM** on the lower level. Please enter the building through the set of doors on the right to go directly downstairs so we do not disturb our Saturday renters.

People of all ages are welcome to attend for an opportunity to play tabletop games or cards with your UUCC friends. Pizza will be provided. You are welcome to bring a side dish to pass and a beverage or your choice, and a favorite game.

We hope you will join us for a relaxing afternoon of fun, fellowship, and games!

# 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.*

## Climate Change is a Wicked Problem

Climate change is a wicked problem. There is no right solution. Every thread points to another. During Climate Month, and Earth Day we hear terms like: end fossil fuels, stop eating meat, electrify everything, etc. But what does it all mean and can it be done at all, let alone quickly. These are the “wicked” conundrums.

I always encourage people to stop eating meat because in a linear world this would save the animal and reduce GHG emissions. But, in a “wicked” world is this truly the case? We don’t just use the meat of animals. We get insulin, leather, gelatin, wool, dairy products, and lanolin. Their by-products are used in insulation, rubber, antifreeze, plastics, waxes, chalk, adhesives, wax paper, lubricants, candles, lipsticks, etc. So unless we find other sources for the myriad products or decide not to use them, we need to raise our livestock (albeit, in a smaller number) and figure out a different solution to livestock GHG emissions. This is also a chicken vs egg problem. We developed all these uses for by-products because raising animals solely for meat was not economical. So if we stop eating meat, will it be economical to continue using these by-products?

Let’s electrify everything and reduce our need for fossil fuels. In a simple world, we could build all the new transmission lines we need in an economically timely fashion. Everyone would have access to all their electrical needs. But in a “wicked” conundrum life is complicated. Every State has their own regulations that transmission lines need to comply with. Private ownership of land delays approval of routes. Lack of trained employees slows the actual building process. Money determines if you can upgrade your electrical box to accommodate your new needs. And where do all the backup batteries come from?

Now transmission lines only move the electricity. Where does the electricity come from? Renewable, clean sources are wind, solar and water. At this point these are the only sources, but people are working on Green Hydrogen (meaning no GHG emissions in its making) and atomic fusion vs our current fission which creates radiation. Converting to renewable energy is basically straightforward. Build wind turbine farms, preferably off-shore or in windy areas. Build solar farms in sunny spots. Michigan cloud cover is definitely not optimal, but the Southwest is ideal. Water is used in various ways: hydraulic dams, wave movement in the ocean, running water in the rivers and streams. Some municipalities are putting small turbines in their water lines!

*Continued on page 13*

# SUSTAINABILITY

But again, none of this is easy. NIMBYism (Not in My BackYard) is rampant. We've seen reservoirs dry up from drought and lakes form from floods.

But the biggest current problem is, what is in the atmosphere will remain for many years and continue to grow until we reach net zero growth and create an efficient, effective carbon removal system. No matter how many solutions we devise, each one will take time to implement. And as with any "wicked" problem, there is no way to test if the solution will help or have unintended consequences. Dubai may have just experienced unintended consequences when they received more rain in one day than they normally get in a year, after seeding clouds the two prior days.

End fossil fuels, the battle cry of the Just Transition. But can we? Over 12% of petroleum is used to make petrochemicals. Like our animal by-products, these are used to make everything we use. Food, plastic, medicine, refrigerants, computers, they are everywhere. Some lists say there are over 6000 products.

Earth 4.5 Billion, hominids 6-7 Million, and modern homo sapiens about 200-300,000 years old. We are the newcomers. When speaking of time are we speaking of geological or human time? Generally, we forget how OLD the earth is. We are species-centric. In fact we are generally, life-span centric. Truly, did anything happen before my memories? Can anything happen after my death? And this has dire consequences when talking about Climate Change!

In 1900, the global population was approximately 1.6 billion and the world forest cover was 48% of habitable land. In 2023, the global population was a little more than 8 billion and the world forest cover was 31%. In 123 years we have significantly raised our population by 500% and decreased our forests by 17%. This affects the global inhale/exhale cycle of the symbiotic relationship of flora and fauna.

In order to solve a problem, even a "wicked" one, we need to not only understand the problem, but to face it head on and repeat Obama's words "Yes, we can". The UCC Sustainability Group issued a new Sustainability Challenge on April 22. It runs through May 20. Let's work as a community and make a difference whenever and wherever we can.

Sincerely,

Nicky

[nickyleigh1226@gmail.com](mailto:nickyleigh1226@gmail.com)



## The UCC 30-Day Sustainability Challenge is going on now!

Each Monday between now and May 20, we will send you an email full of things to watch, read, listen and do that will inspire you to practice more healthy and sustainable habits. Visit [tinyurl.com/30DaySustainabilityChallenge](https://tinyurl.com/30DaySustainabilityChallenge) to sign up today!

Whether you are new to the idea of sustainability or a green living veteran, the UCC Sustainability Challenge will provide you with food for thought and ideas for action!

The Sustainability Challenge is not just for UCC members and friends. Feel free to share info about the challenge with everyone you know!

# 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 May, many Black-led and Black-centered organizations focus on dismantling systemic racism in the criminal justice system use Mother's Day to highlight the inequities of the cash bail system by bailing out as many black mamas and caregivers as possible so they can spend Mother's day with their families and communities. You can learn more about these efforts at [nationalbailout.org](http://nationalbailout.org)



Our 8th Principle resource this month is more information about the cash bail system and how it impacts low income Michiganders. This information comes from the our justice partners at [Michigan Liberation](http://MichiganLiberation.org) and the Bold Against Bail Coalition, a partnership of several organizations which seek to build momentum to pass expansive and comprehensive bail reform in Michigan.

### What is Cash Bail and How Does It Work?

- Cash bail is the requirement that an individual pay money or leverage assets (like a home or a car) while waiting for court proceedings or a trial
- When cash bail is set, the accused person is legally assumed to be innocent.
- A person who cannot afford bail must either pay for a bail bondsman or languish in jail until their day in court, or (more likely) take a plea deal (even if they are innocent) to end their incarceration.
- Cash bail produces an inconsistent system where MONEY determines whether one is free or in jail, even when charged with the same offense.
- Cash bail disproportionately harms low-income people of color.
- When community members are forced to remain in jail because they cannot afford bail, they risk losing their jobs, housing, and even custody of their children.
- Did you know that 60% of people held in Michigan jails have not been convicted of a crime, they simply cannot afford bail.
- The system of cash bail is unjust and should be reformed.



# RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION

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

On Mother’s Day, our congregation will celebrate Flower Communion as we do every spring. The story of Norbert Čapek and his wife Maria and the ritual they gifted to Unitarian Universalism is one of my favorites. I especially love how UU ministers David and Theresa Schwartz like to tell it. It goes like this.. Nobert Čapek’s mother was a devout Catholic, his father agnostic. He became an acolyte at age 10, in 1890 at St. Martin’s Catholic Church. But in the years that followed, he became disillusioned.

At 18, while apprenticed to his uncle, a successful tailor in Vienna, Norbert discovered the Baptists and became a minister. He founded almost a dozen churches from Ukraine to Budapest. Yet, slowly, his faith became more and more liberal.

He left Bohemia under government threat and accepted a call to serve a Baptist church in New York City... until one day in 1919, he wrote in his diary: “I cannot be a Baptist anymore, even in compromise. The fire of new desires, new worlds, is burning inside me.” Norbert and his wife, Mája Čapek, joined a Unitarian church in New Jersey in 1921—for the same reason many UUs do: their children liked the religious education program. (That’s the power of our Sunday School program and teachers.)

At the urging of the a newly elected leaders, Norbert and Maja returned home to Czechoslovakia. In Prague he founded a Unitarian church called the Liberal Religious Fellowship. In just 20 years, his church had grown to 3,200 members.

The traditional communion ritual of bread and wine did not meet the needs of his congregation, because his church—like ours—had people who believed different things. Čapek turned to the beauty of the countryside; to the beauty of flowers. In 1923, he created the flower communion. He asked his congregants to bring a flower to church—from their gardens, the field, or the roadside. He invited each person to place their flower in a vase. This represented the church community, no less unique for being united. Following the service, each person could take a flower from the vase—a different one than they had brought.

Čapek was a visionary minister with a church ahead of its time, a bold church, a church thinking beyond its doors, beyond what it thought possible. It was a church that was willing to take risks; to make tough decisions; to bear disappointment; and to build a new way. That was Čapek’s church. That is our church. For this, the Gestapo arrested him in 1942. The Nazis accused Čapek of listening to foreign broadcasts, and sent him to the Dachau concentration camp. Even in starvation and torture, he held a flower ceremony with his fellow prisoners, finding whatever flowers they could among the weeds of the camp. They testified to a beauty larger than themselves, and a love that would outlive them. The Nazis killed Norbert Čapek but his spirit, courage, and commitment live on. Those qualities have passed, now, to us. We are called to make them real.

Each spring we hold not a historical reenactment of something over and done, but an affirmation of our

continuity with the generations of struggle for ever-widening liberty. The Flower Communion isn’t a diversion from ugly reality, but a gentle fierceness which proclaims that in the midst of sinister days there is always the light of beauty. May it be so.

### MAY RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION SCHEDULE

DATE	LESSON	VOLUNTEERS
May 5	Lego ValUUes	Regena and Eric Nelson
May 12	Multigenerational Sunday Service	N/A
May 19	Lego ValUUes	Pat Timm
May 26	Lego ValUUes	Mary Roscoe

# DRAG SHOW 2024

## drag 101 workshop

3PM TO 5PM

WITH HOST MISS MOSCATO  
FEATURING  
SAVANNAH HAWTHORNE WILLIAMS  
& REBA ROSE RAU

MUST REGISTER ONLINE

[tinyurl.com/uuccdragworkshop2024](https://tinyurl.com/uuccdragworkshop2024)



Unitarian Universalist  
Community Church  
10441 Shaver Road, Portage, MI  
[uuccommunitychurch.org](http://uuccommunitychurch.org)

LEARN FROM  
EXPERIENCED QUEENS  
IN A PANEL STYLE  
REVIEW!



MOTHERS  
KNOW  
BEST!

SATURDAY **MAY 25TH**

SAVANNAH  
HAWTHORNE  
WILLIAMS

REBA  
ROSE  
RAU

EXPERIENCE THE  
JOY OF DRAG!



HOST MISS MOSCATO

all **6PM TO 8PM**  
ages  
drag  
show

FREE TICKETS  
MUST REGISTER ONLINE

[tinyurl.com/uuccdragshow2024](https://tinyurl.com/uuccdragshow2024)





# OPPORTUNITIES



## WomUUn's Retreat

The **WomUUn's Community** at **First UU of Ann Arbor** will host its annual **WomUUn's Retreat** on **October 11-13**, at **YMCA Camp Copneconic** in

Fenton, MI. They extend an invitation to other UU women\* from around Michigan and Ohio to join them for this fabulous **Weekend Escape!**

The retreat kicks off on Friday evening with a pot-luck Community Café, book and jewelry exchanges, tile painting and a Welcoming Session and a bonfire with storytelling. Saturday will be packed with small group gatherings; good food; relaxed and fun art and craft workshops; outdoor activities such as zip lining, archery and high ropes course, and a joyful singalong/jam session/dance party. Sunday morning will wrap up with a closing Community Celebration.

Registration opened is now open and all registration materials are available at [uuaa.org/womuuns-community](http://uuaa.org/womuuns-community). Early bird pricing ends on June 30.

\*All WomUUn's Community activities are open to anyone with a marginalized gender identity including non-binary and gender-fluid folk, trans women, and trans men.



HOPE FOR CREATION ~ 10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

## How can we be Earth Healers?

Soup Dinner and Climate Conversation with Debra Reinstra, author of *Refugia Faith*

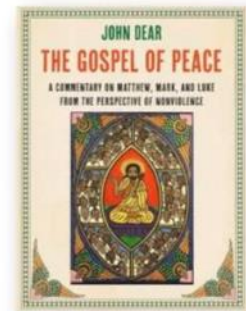


May 2  
6 - 8 PM

RSVP at [info@hopeforcreation.net](mailto:info@hopeforcreation.net)  
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
345 W MICHIGAN AVE, KALAMAZOO

## A Evening with John Dear

On **May 13** at 7:00 PM, Father John Dear will be at St. Thomas More Church in Kalamazoo to talk about his newly released book, "The Gospel of Peace." All are welcome to this free event which will take place in the sanctuary. Afterwards, we will acknowledge a free-will offering basket - and then head upstairs for refreshments and book signings.



## World Labyrinth Day

is an annual international event sponsored by [The Labyrinth Society](http://TheLabyrinthSociety.com). Every year on the first Saturday in May thousands of people around the world participate in this moving meditation of world peace and celebration of the labyrinth experience. Our friends at Unity of Kalamazoo invite everyone to "Walk as One" at **1:00 PM** on **May 4** in their labyrinth at 1204 Whites Road in Kalamazoo. For more information visit [unitykalamazoo.com](http://unitykalamazoo.com) or call 269-385-2239 Let us all walk together for PEACE!

# OPPORTUNITIES

Take time out of your busy life to relax and de-stress at our **Drop-In Mindfulness Practice** led by **Eric Nelson** at 7 PM on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month.

There are several ways you can participate:

- In-person at Prince of Peace Church located at 1747 Milham Road, Portage
- Live Online via Zoom link
- At your convenience. All Zoom registrants receive a recording of each class to view when convenient and to use for guided practice between sessions.

To registered for a Zoom link and recordings visit [tinyurl.com/uuccdropin](https://tinyurl.com/uuccdropin)



*Mindfulness Meditation  
Drop-In Session with  
Eric Nelson*

**1st and 3rd Tuesday  
7:00 - 8:00 PM**

In person at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church  
or on Zoom

**REGISTER FOR ZOOM**  
[tinyurl.com/uuccdropin](https://tinyurl.com/uuccdropin)

 Unitarian Universalist  
Community Church

## What Jesus Really Taught in His Native Aramaic

A Unifying Path to Love & Freedom Using the  
True Meaning of Jesus' Words & Wisdom

Back in October, we were joined by the world-renowned Religious Studies scholar **Neil Douglas-Klotz, PhD** for a Sunday service that explored how the meaning of the Christian scriptures changed as they were translated from the original Aramaic into other languages.

Those who enjoyed Dr. Douglas-Klotz's presentation might be interested in attending a free online program he is offering on **Tuesday, May 7 at 8:30 PM.**

In this program he will delve deeper into his understanding of Jesus' original teachings (before organized religion translated and often misrepresented his message) and share short experiential practices that can "help us begin to re-knit our human self—which can feel increasingly separate, isolated and anxious—back into a larger reality, including nature. "

Click [HERE](#) to register for this program or visit [abwoon.org](https://abwoon.org)

A recording will be available to everyone who registers.



## Help Each Other Survey

Do you need occasional help with household tasks? Is there a skill or hobby you'd like to learn? Perhaps someone at UCC can help you out!

To get the mutual-aid ball rolling, please click [HERE](#) and fill out our Help Each Other Survey! After we collect the kinds of help people would like, we will do a follow-up survey of to find out who might be willing to help. We plan to make these lists available for you to consult when the need arises.



# MAY 2024



DAY	DATE	EVENT	TIME
Wednesday	May 1	Board of Trustees Meeting	6:30 PM
Thursday	May 2	Stewardship Committee Meeting	1:00 PM
Saturday	May 4	Qigong Game Gathering	9:00 AM 3:00 PM
Sunday	May 5	<i>What is Hope?</i> with Rev. Gy and UU Exploration for Kids After-Service Social Time Budget Roundtable	10:00 AM 11:00 AM 11:20 AM
Tuesday	May 7	Qigong Drop-In Mindfulness Practice with Eric	9:00 AM 7:00 PM
Wednesday	May 8	Sunday Services Committee Meeting	5:30 PM
Thursday	May 9	Thoughtful Thursday with Elaine Pereira from Compassion & Choices	7:00 PM
Friday	May 10	Women's Book Group	1:00 PM
Saturday	May 11	Qigong	9:00 AM
Sunday	May 12	<i>Flower Communion</i> with Rev. Gy; NO UU Exploration for Kids After-Service Social Time	10:00 AM 11:00 AM
Tuesday	May 14	Qigong	9:00 AM
Friday	May 17	OHTC presents Continuum of Care	6:00 PM
Saturday	May 18	Qigong 3rd Saturday Breakfast Group OHTC presents Continuum of Care	9:00 AM 9:00 AM 6:00 PM
Sunday	May 19	<i>Leaps of Faith</i> with Rev. Gy and UU Exploration for Kids After Service Social Time OHTC presents Continuum of Care	10:00 AM 11:00 AM 2:00 PM
Monday	May 20	Sustainability Group	7:00 PM
Tuesday	May 21	Qigong Drop-In Mindfulness with Eric	9:00 AM 7:00 PM
Wednesday	May 22	NEWSLETTER DEADLINE Spiritual Growth Group	12:00 PM 6:30 PM
Saturday	May 25	Qigong UUCG Drag 101 Workshop UUCG All-Ages Drag Show	9:00 AM 3:00 PM 6:00 PM
Sunday	May 26	<i>Building the Beloved Community</i> with UUCG Civil Conversations Group UU Exploration for Kids After Service Social Time	10:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:00 AM
Tuesday	May 28	Qigong	9:00 AM
Thursday	May 30	Exploring Anti-Racism Group	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](mailto:gyludvig@gmail.com)  
Cell: 269-352-2412

Miriam Epskamp  
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Chris Petersmark  
Music Director  
[christopherpetersmark@gmail.com](mailto:christopherpetersmark@gmail.com)  
Cell phone: 248-535-4197

**2023-2024 Board of Trustees**

Steve Tasko

Eric Nelson

Pat Timm

Marsha Laya

Mike Graham

**The next Newsletter Deadline is  
Wednesday, May 22 at NOON**

Please send submissions to:

**[uuccnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:uuccnewsletter@gmail.com)**

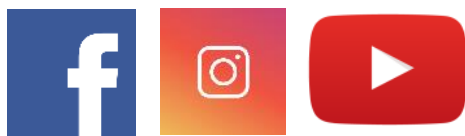
*CommUUnity Matters*

**Unitarian Universalist Community Church  
of Southwest Michigan**

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



**CONNECT WITH US!**



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