



# CommUUunity Matters

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest Michigan

January 2025

## JANUARY SUNDAY SERVICES

Sundays at 10:00 AM Onsite, on YouTube, or on Zoom

### January 5: *Letter to Self* with Rev. Gy

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

Click [HERE](#) to register or visit [tinyurl.com/uuccletters2025](https://tinyurl.com/uuccletters2025)

### January 12: *It's All a Choice* with Rev. Gy

A lot has happened since Michelle Obama first spoke the now-famous catchphrase, "When they go low, we go high." Many of us have learned that when you go up against those who fight dirty it is impossible to stay clean. How can we stay true to our principles and values when others are willing to say and do anything to win?

Click [HERE](#) to register or visit [visit tinyurl.com/uuccchoices](https://tinyurl.com/uuccchoices)

### January 19: *Sharing Grief* with Rev. Gy

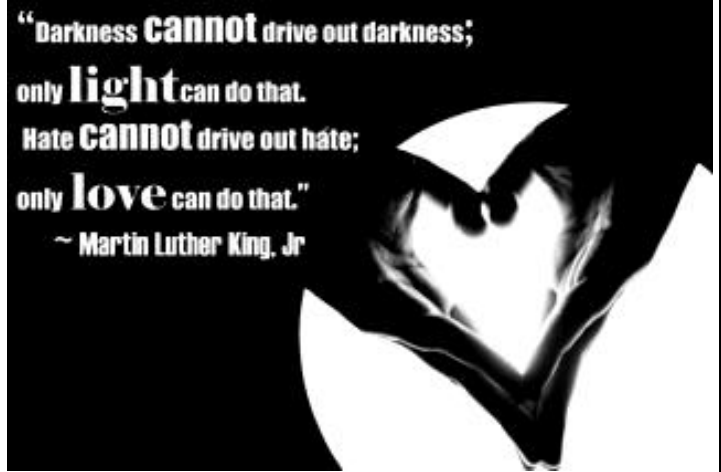
UUCC member Sherrie Vandeputte purchased the topic for this sermon at our annual Goods and Services Auction. We all experience grief and loss. They are as much a part of life as joy and happiness. We may not be able to choose whether we experience these things, but we can choose how we face them.

Click [HERE](#) to register or visit [tinyurl.com/uuccsharinggrief](https://tinyurl.com/uuccsharinggrief)

### January 26: *Project 2026* with John Hoadley

A potential roadmap for the next two years must include resistance, renewal, and protecting the progress we have made in diversity, equity, and inclusion in Michigan. Our guest speaker John Hoadley proposes a "Project 2026" and will share what it might mean for our community.

Click [HERE](#) to register or visit [tinyurl.com/uuccproject2026](https://tinyurl.com/uuccproject2026)



## Spiritual Theme for January CHOOSING LOVE

During the course of this church year, we are exploring how we can ground our daily personal and collective choices in Love. In January, we will reflect on love—not just as a feeling, but as a transformative force that calls us to action—and how we can make love-centered choices to ground our words and actions.

Rev. Natalie Fenimore, in *Love at the Center: Unitarian Universalist Theologies*, reminds us of the prophetic voices among us who embody a love ethic. Among them was bell hooks, who taught that love is active engagement—dismantling systems of oppression like racism and sexism while building communities rooted in care, respect, and cooperation.

As Unitarian Universalists, we are called to be prophets of love, living out this ethic in our words and actions. Love challenges us to act for justice, create belonging, and extend the circle of care to all.

Questions to ponder: *Who are the prophets of love in your life? How can you learn from their example? What choices can you make to help you become a beacon of love in the world?*

# GUESTS IN THE PULPIT

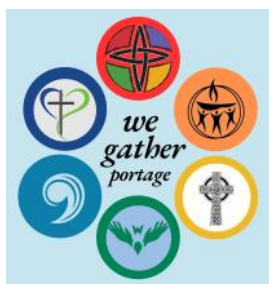
**We are excited to welcome these guests to our pulpit in January:**



With nearly twenty years of experience managing people, organizations, financial resources, and coalitions to achieve high-impact outcomes, **Jon Hoadley** is Executive Director of the Michigan Donor Alliance. Hoadley served in the Michigan Legislature from 2015-2020. He was the Minority Vice Chair of Appropriations and on the leadership team of the Democratic caucus. Previously, Hoadley ran Badlands Strategies, a progressive public affairs firm specializing in coalition management, campaigns, and donor advising, and as Executive Director of National Stonewall

Democrats. He loves helping people achieve the change they want to see in the world.

**Sue Riley** will join us for our January Thoughtful Thursday conversation on **January 23 at 7 PM via Zoom**. Sue is a celebrated singer-songwriter known for her powerful and uplifting music that inspires positive change. (Her song ***I Made Room for Grace*** is popular at UUCC!) With eight albums of positive, empowering music and over 20 years as a leader in transformative music, Sue's work has inspired countless lives. She is co-founder and director of [emPower Music & Arts](#) and has dedicated her career to fostering unity and transformation through music. To register for this Thoughtful Thursday visit page [8](#).



## We Gather

A group of pastors in Portage, including our own Rev. Gy, has formed **We Gather**, a collective initiative to inspire people of faith to connect across denominational lines. Their mission is to celebrate our shared values—justice, love, compassion, service, diversity, and respect—while strengthening the community and providing opportunities to work together for the common good.

We Gather will host various events throughout the year to foster interaction among Portage congregations including:

**We Gather in Gratitude:** A Community Thanksgiving Service in November.

**We Gather with Pride:** A Portage Pride Picnic in June.

**We Gather in Hope:** A worship service on **Monday, January 20**, at **6 PM** at Portage United Church of Christ on Milham Ave. This service will offer the community a space for hopeful reflection and prayer on Inauguration Day. Participating congregations include Prince of Peace Lutheran, Portage United Church of Christ, St. Barnabas Episcopal, Portage Chapel Hill Church, UUCC, and Westminster Presbyterian.

# FROM THE MINISTER



## From the Minister

[Rev. Gy Ludvig-McCartney](#)

*We are not going back! ~ Kamala Harris*

Recently Patti and I strangely found ourselves at a wedding at the KIA where we didn't know either of the grooms.

Here's how it happened...

One of our good friends was invited to this wedding and was asked to bring friends because the family of one of the grooms refused to attend. It was a quick and easy yes for us.

It was a lovely event. Former mayor, Bobby Hopewell officiated and two drag queens made sure fun was had by all.

At one point "our" groom, the one we were there to support, got up to speak. He spoke of the times when he worked at Meijer, long before he was "out". He knew, of course, he knew he was gay, but didn't know any gay people. There was a couple, though, who came shopping every weekend and always checked out the pet food aisle where our groom stacked the shelves. He looked at them longingly, wanting to engage them, but never mustering up the courage.

Then one weekend he decided, this is it! Today he will speak to them. He waited, heart beating fast with anticipation and anxiety. The couple rounded the corner, our groom was face to face with them, and .....said nothing! The couple left and he stood there defeated.

He was beating himself up all afternoon when an unusual thing happened! The couple returned to the pet food aisle!! It never happened before! They'd come once a week and that's that, but on this day they returned and this time our groom found his words!

The couple couldn't have been nicer or kinder. They introduced him to OutFront where Tracy Hall received him kindly. She was the first one to tell him that he's perfect the way he is. Memories brought tears to his eyes—tears of relief and gratitude.

He got involved with OutFront and has played a significant part in helping with establishing housing for the homeless LGBTQ youth.

OutFront had an event at the KIA where he met his now husband. It seemed only right to have the wedding at the KIA.

As I listened to him talk, I felt something stirring inside me. Most of my thoughts have their first appearance in visions. I saw seeds, many, many seeds. Seeds of change. Seeds of kindness. Seeds of compassion. Seeds of justice. Seeds that sprout a world different from the one we now know, better in so many ways. (More on page 4)

# GENERAL ASSEMBLY

(Continued from page 3). Then I saw these seeds sprouting—determined, ready, and oh so vulnerable. Then I saw large, old, ugly boots trample them. There were many, many boots and they worked hard at stomping out the fresh shoots. But the seeds were legion! Where one got trampled, hundreds came behind. Then, the old boots one by one fell into the dirt while the seeds kept reaching for the sky...

The change is here. It may still feel unlikely, threatened, and feeble, but it is here. It is sprouting in the hearts and minds of many. It is determined and getting ready. The ways of the old world are putting up a fight, but there's no going back. We are not going back!

From the ashes of a greedy profit-oriented world there shall emerge a new way. It will be kinder, it will honor life, and it will allow love to lead the way.

It won't be perfect, I don't think anything ever will. It will care to be better, though, and that'll do for a while. Until new seeds emerge, kinder and better yet...

Because we are not going back!



**UUA GENERAL ASSEMBLY**  
BALTIMORE • JUNE 18 - 22, 2025

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

From June 18–22, 2025, the 64th UUA General Assembly will be a multi-platform event, with the main stage hosted at the Baltimore Convention Center in Baltimore, Maryland, and hundreds more joining virtually on the Whova app.

Early Bird Registration is now open for GA 2025. (Prices are set to increase on March 31.) The UUA and UUCC may have financial support for those wishing to attend. GA Volunteers attend for Free.

**Two delegates are needed to attend business meetings and represent UUCC at General Assembly.** If you are interested in serving as a delegate, contact a UUCC Board Member or discuss the details with Miriam. Delegates may attend the General Assembly business meetings at no cost.

To learn more about GA, visit [uua.org/ga](http://uua.org/ga) or talk to someone who has attended in the past—Eric Nelson, Marsha Laya, Dawn Renner, Rev. Gy, Judy Halseth, Stephanie Grathwol, Kimberly Ridley, or Miriam.

# CARING COMMUNITY



## JANUARY CARING COMMUNITY NEWS

*Gratitude turns what we have into enough, and more.*

*It turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, confusion into clarity*

*...it makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.*

– Melody Beattie

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

Our joys and concerns this month were filled with gratitude shoutouts...

For **Steve Tasko** and the **Tech Team** for providing us with online options for watching services, especially in the winter.

For **Mary Roscoe** and our UUCC thespians for a great job on The Night Before Christmas play. Wouldn't it be fun if it was a yearly event?

From **Larry Farris** who was grateful for the opportunity to be with us again and for all the UUCC folks who made his virtual visit possible.

From **Nancy Crowell** who is grateful for all the love and support she has received from UUCC friends as she heals from hip surgery.

For the UUCC Singers—**Freya Lake, Judy Halseth, Pat Fuehr, Dave Uttermohlen, and David Senecal**, for special musical guest **David Brozovich**, our Music Director **Luke Kritzman**, and **Miriam** for putting on a wonderful Solstice service.

For **Rev. Gy, Eric Nelson, Stephanie Grathwol, Pat Fuehr, Dave Uttermohlen, Miriam**, and special musical guests **Kate Cook** and **Annie Muse** for providing us with such a lovely Christmas Eve service.

### **Birthdays and Anniversaries:**

We also give thanks for love in the springtime, which gave us these January birthdays...

5-**Dick Bott**, 7-**Nancy Stob**, 7 – **Pat Fuehr**, 11-**Sherrie VandePutte**, 17-**Ron Crowell**, 17-**Mary King**, 20-**Amanda Nelson**, 22 – **Hailey Poulsen**, 23-**Judy Oliver**, 25-**Betty Lee Ongley**, 25-**Isaac Epskamp**, 27- **Kevin Brozovich**

In addition, **Teri and Dave Uttermohlen** have a January 3 wedding anniversary!

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

**Susie Johnson** -January 19, 2006

**Otto Byers**—January 22, 2015

**Elizabeth Fernandez** - January 14, 2021 (UUCC founder)

**Herb Gross** -January 10, 2024

### **Welcome Guests!**

We are grateful for all the visitors who joined us in December—**Cher Anderson, Kelly Spicer, Laura Crabtree– Hollenbeck, Katie Klute, Manda Teirman, Corky Thomas, Judy and John Mickley, Jacquie Blackwell, Kristi Harnishfeger, Kelly Dannielle, and Angela Lumsden.**

We hope you will stop by 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 UUCC office at 269-324-7262 or [uucommunity@gmail.com](mailto:uucommunity@gmail.com).*

# LEADERSHIP



The Board of Trustees met on December 4. Here are a few of the things they accomplished:

- Began a review of Board Policies
- Learned about plans for Drag Show 2025
- Set a date for a mid-year retreat to discuss the 2025/2026 budget in detail.
- Discussed meeting with a commercial real estate broker to find a renter to replace the Church of God.

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

The next regular Board meeting will take place via Zoom on **Wednesday, January 8 at 7:00 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](#).

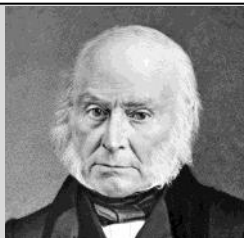
## 2024 Contribution Statements

If you gave traceable payments on a pledge or other contributions to UUCC, you will receive an emailed Contribution Statement in January 2024 from Kimberly Ridley. The Contribution Statement will show all your giving activity recorded in church records for the calendar year ended 12/31/24.

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

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

Thank you,  
Kimberly Ridley, Assistant Treasurer  
Email [ridleyk@hotmail.com](mailto:ridleyk@hotmail.com)  
(269) 569-3658



*If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.*

~John Quincy Adams

# PROGRAM COUNCIL



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

Everyone - members, friends, visitors—is invited to help create programming at UU Community Church on second Sundays at around 11:20 AM. Bring your voice to our next meeting on **January 12**. We will meet following the service and you can participate either in person or on Zoom.

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

We enjoyed great November Sunday services from **Rev. Harold Beu**, guest speaker **Fred Stella**, the Bread Communion Team of **Miriam, Nick, Amanda, Declan, and Theo**, and UUCC members **Ron Crowell, Mary Roscoe, Mary King, Nancy Calme, Stephanie Grathwol, David Senecal, and David Uttermohlen** who shared personal stories of transformation and change. Our **Thoughtful Thursday** with **Byron Katie** got canceled because of the wildfires in California but the very capable **Martha Creek** stepped in to provide the folks that showed up an opportunity to talk about and process the November election. We also provided two other **opportunities to be together** on Election Night and on the day after. **Eric Nelson** hosted a free **Mindfulness Retreat** and ten UUCC folks attended the **Community Thanksgiving Service** at Westminster Presbyterian Church (three added their voices to the beautiful multi-denomination choir!) We are small, but we are mighty!

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

**Drag Show 2025:** The Youth Program will host a free, all-ages Drag Show featuring Miss Moscato and friends on Saturday, January 18 at 6 PM. Volunteers are needed.

**Spring Fundraiser:** The Stewardship Committee is planning a dinner + concert fundraiser on March 15. Save the date!

**Betty Lee's Birthday:** UUCC member **Betty Lee Ongley** will celebrate her 99th birthday in January. **Pat Fuehr, Sherrie Vandeputte, Joe and Nancy Calme, and Mary Roscoe** volunteered to plan a birthday celebration after the service on January 26. Look for more info on page [12](#).

**Outreach:** Please remember to like and share UUCC posts on social media to help spread the word about Unitarian Universalism. (You can find links to our Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram in every Weekly Email.

**Meet Up:** The Growth Team is trying [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) as a new way to spread the word about our events. Click [HERE](#) to learn how you can help us by becoming a member of Meet Up.

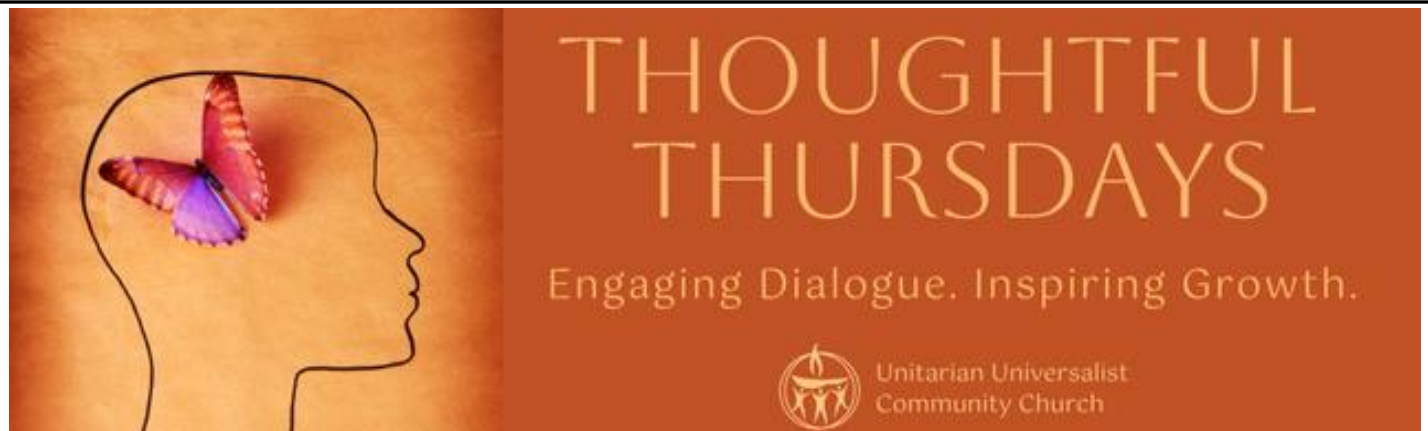
**Gun Violence Prevention Presentation:** **Sherrie Vandeputte, Michael Graham, and Kathryn Ragains-Wilson** volunteered to help organize a Town Hall meeting at UUCC that will help people learn about the new gun violence prevention laws in Michigan.

**MUUSJN:** We were reminded of the important advocacy work that the Michigan UU Social Justice Network does on our behalf and the importance of individuals becoming supporting members. If it is yours to do, visit [uujustice.org](https://uujustice.org) and become a member, or renew your membership today!

## Our **NEXT MEETING:**

Program Council will meet at around 11:20 AM on January 8. Join us in person or via Zoom, and help keep UUCC's programs going strong. We will serve a light soup luncheon before the Program Council Meeting. All donations will help support youth programs at UUCC. If you have questions about Program Council, or items to add to the agenda, contact **Kathryn Ragains-Wilson**.

# THOUGHTFUL THURSDAY



**Thoughtful Thursdays** at UUCC are enlightening evenings that feature thought leaders sharing insights on a topic of importance to us: spiritual growth, social justice, environmental sustainability, and more. It is your opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions and broaden your perspective about critical issues and ideas. We have an exciting lineup of guests scheduled for this fall. Each of these events will give you an opportunity to listen to and dialog with people who are living from the heart. Please plan to join us **on Zoom at 7 PM** for these unique opportunities to learn and grow.



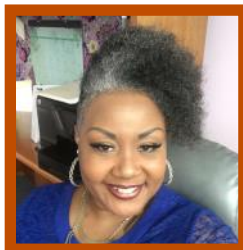
**January 23: Changing the World; One Song at a Time with Sue Riley**

Sue Riley, the owner of EmPower Music & Arts and a prolific singer/songwriter will join us to talk about the power of music to touch hearts, heal lives, and change the world! Click [HERE](#) to register.



**February 27: Becoming More of Who You Are with Russell Bishop**

Renowned life coach, mentor, bestselling author, and creator of Insight Seminars, Russell Bishop will join us to talk about awakening, transformation, self-improvement, and his latest book, *From Self-Talk to Soul Talk: Becoming More of Who You Truly Are*.



**March 20: Housing for All with Stephanie Hoffman**

Stephanie Hoffman, former Executive Director at Open Doors Kalamazoo, current Kalamazoo City Commissioner, and overall AWESOME and IMPACTFUL housing advocate (according to our friend Gwendolyn Hooker) will join us to discuss the housing situation in Kalamazoo.

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.



# LEARNING AND GROWTH

## Growth to Clarity 2025: A Retreat for Self-Discovery and Well-Being

Embarking on a new year often calls for a reset, a chance to realign our priorities and reconnect with our inner selves. This new year, the UU Community Church of Southwest Michigan invites individuals to embark on a unique journey of personal transformation through its upcoming one-day workshop. *Growth to Clarity: A Retreat for Self-Discovery and Well-Being*. Scheduled for **Saturday, February 1**, from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM, the workshop will take place at UCC.

Led by UCC member and personal transformation coach **Kathryn Ragains-Wilson**, with support from Mindfulness Trainer **Eric Nelson**, **Rev. Gy**, and new this year, **Sandy Derby**, founding partner at Preferred Financial Group, the workshop promises to be an inspirational and empowering day dedicated to unlocking the healing power of self-awareness and self-care.



Participants will embark on a holistic journey that encourages them to listen to their "wise self" and discover strategies for self-renewal in their daily lives.

Here's what they can expect:

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

The cost of the workshop, which includes a catered vegetarian lunch, is \$25.00 dollars to cover materials costs. Scholarships are available by contacting [uucommunity@gmail.com](mailto:uucommunity@gmail.com).

For people seeking to begin the year with intention, "Growth to Clarity," will support your journey toward self-care, healing, and growth in the coming year.

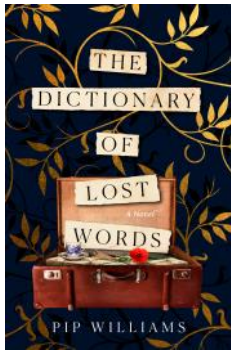
Enrollment is limited so secure your spot early! Register now [tinyurl.com/renewalretreat2025](https://tinyurl.com/renewalretreat2025)



If there is sufficient interest, we will hold a **UU History 101 Class** starting on **January 19**. This will be a 6-session introduction to concepts and people from Unitarian Universalist history. In this series, we will approach history from the starting point of compelling stories and personalities. Participants explore the questions those people faced and make connections with our own lives and the world around us today. Led by our Director of Religious Education, Miriam Epskamp, the class will meet both onsite and online on **Sunday afternoons at 12:30 PM**. Each 60-minute session is stand-alone and open to both new and returning participants, however, we

will need at least 6 people to commit to attending the full series before we move forward. Click [HERE](#) to use our online signup sheet or look for a paper copy at the back of the sanctuary.

# CONNECTION



## Women's Book Group Friday, January 10 1:00 PM via Zoom

January Selection:  
*The Dictionary of Lost Words*  
by Pip Williams

From Goodreads:

*In 1901, the word 'Bondmaid' was discovered missing from the **Oxford English Dictionary**. This is the story of the girl who stole it.*

*Esme is born into a world of words. Motherless and irrepressibly curious, she spends her childhood in the 'Scriptorium', a garden shed in Oxford where her father and a team of dedicated lexicographers are collecting words for the very first Oxford English Dictionary. Esme's place is beneath the sorting table, unseen and unheard. One day a slip of paper containing the word 'bondmaid' flutters to the floor. Esme rescues the slip and stashes it in an old wooden case that belongs to her friend, Lizzie, a young servant in the big house. Esme begins to collect other words from the Scriptorium that are misplaced, discarded or have been neglected by the dictionary men. They help her make sense of the world. Over time, Esme realizes that some words are considered more important than others, and that words and meanings relating to women's experiences often go unrecorded. While she dedicates her life to the **Oxford English Dictionary**, secretly, she begins to collect words for another dictionary: **The Dictionary of Lost Words**.*

The Book Group will meet at 1:00 PM on January 10 for a short business meeting and a discussion of the book led by Stephanie. Click [HERE](#) to join the Book Group Zoom.

## Qigong at UCC

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

Qigong, a series of mindful movements and breathing exercises that can help center the mind and relax the body, is a great way to start your day.



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

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

Meeting ID: 697 338 090 Passcode: 138550

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

Meeting ID: 977 5286 6838 Passcode: 383810

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



## 3rd Saturday Breakfast Group

The UCC Breakfast Group will meet for breakfast on **Saturday, January 18** at 9:00 AM at [The Rooster's Call](#) (formerly Burger Town Grille) at 9136 Shaver Road in Portage.

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



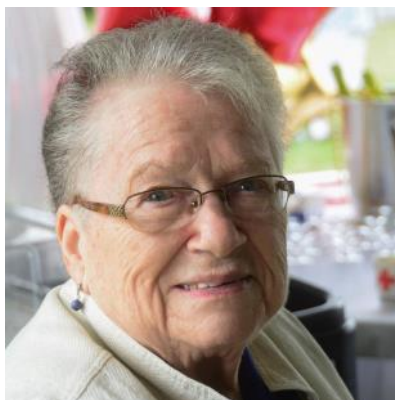
## January Game Gathering

Our monthly Game Gathering will meet on the **lower level** of UCC on Saturday, **January 4 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.

# CELEBRATE

## Happy Birthday, Betty Lee!

Come to church on **Sunday, January 26** with a potluck dish to celebrate the 99th birthday of our longtime member, **Betty Lee Ongley!**



Born on January 25, 1926, Betty Lee is originally from Algonac, Michigan. She attended Algonac High School where she was the first female sousaphone player in the school band and first woman in the town's marching band! She attended Western Michigan University where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Biology and Social Science in 1947 and a Master's degree in Social Science in 1958. She also received a designation as an Education Specialist, Counseling and Personnel Study in 1974, a Graduate Certificate in Holistic Health in 1984, and a Graduate Certificate in Gerontology in 1991. In addition to

being an exemplary member of UUCC who has served the congregation in many ways, Betty Lee is an activist, community leader, educator, and mentor who became the state's first female mayor when she was elected as Portage's mayor in 1973. She is well known as a community servant who both founded and contributed to a myriad of organizations to make life better for those in Kalamazoo County and the State of Michigan. In the early 1990's she helped co-found the Kalamazoo Russian Cultural Association and its partnership between Kalamazoo and Pushkin, Saint Petersburg, and served as a member of many delegations to Pushkin.

To honor Betty's many city exchange trips to Russia, we would love it if some UUCC cooks could bring dishes in the theme of a **Russian Tea Party** to the potluck after the service on January 26. Not sure what to make? Here are some suggested menu items:

- [Piroshki](#): A Russian tea party menu staple
- [Caviar and Blini](#): Served with sour cream
- [Cheese Tarts](#): A Russian tea party sweet
- [Russian Tea Cakes](#): A Russian tea party sweet
- [Poppy Seed Cookies](#): A Russian tea party sweet
- [Walnut Crescents](#): A Russian tea party sweet
- [Charlotte Russe](#): A Russian tea party sweet
- [Kulich and Paskha](#): An Easter food for a Russian tea party



Of course, all kinds of contributions are welcome, as a potluck is always full of surprises. Or if cooking isn't your thing, you can just bring yourself. Please plan to come celebrate with Betty, and if you are new since the Covid years, come and meet her for the first time. She is a UUCC treasure!

# SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

Small Groups at UUCC are a great way to deepen your relationship with the church community and our Unitarian Universalist faith. You can drop in to most groups as your schedule allows or make regular attendance your spiritual practice. Newcomers are always welcome!



## Finding Joy Through a Smaller Environmental Foot Print

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

The Sustainability Group's next regular meeting will be on **Monday, January 20 at 7:00 PM** via Zoom. Newcomers, no matter what stage of the sustainability journey they are on, are always welcome to this group! Click [HERE](#) to join the Zoom, Meeting ID 960 9812 1445 Contact Miriam ([uucommunity@gmail.com](mailto:uucommunity@gmail.com)) for more information.

## Building Beloved Community, One Conversation at a Time



Our **Civil Conversation 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. In January, the group will discuss the **Land Back Movement**, an indigenous-led campaign aimed at reclaiming ancestral lands and restoring Indigenous sovereignty over territories that were taken through colonization.

All are welcome to join the conversation on Wednesday, **January 15 at 7 PM** Click [HERE](#) to register or visit [tinyurl.com/UUCCcivilconvosJan2025](https://tinyurl.com/UUCCcivilconvosJan2025)



## Cultivating Emotional Resilience and Self-Compassion

Experienced Mindfulness practitioner, Eric Nelson hosts our **Mindful Living Group** on the **2nd and 4th Mondays of each month from 7-8 PM on Zoom**.

With no long-term commitment, participants can choose to attend sessions month-by-month, integrating mindfulness into daily life at a comfortable pace. This group is structured to help you develop emotional resilience, cultivate self-compassion, and foster deep, meaningful relationships.

The theme for January is Ethical Living.

Join Eric for an enriching experience that guides you toward a more mindful, balanced life and discover the transformative power of mindfulness! If you are interested but can't attend in real-time, recordings of each session will be sent to everyone who registers

Click [HERE](#) to register or visit [tinyurl.com/AwakenTheHeart](https://tinyurl.com/AwakenTheHeart)

# CLIMATE ACTION

## KALAMAZOO CLIMATE CRISIS COALITION



### ANNUAL CELEBRATION

Live Music + Delicious Food + Fun + Inspiring Talks + Community



January 9  
6:00 – 8:00pm



The Xperience By LuXury  
Escapes Event Venue

145 Farmers Alley, Kalamazoo, MI 49007



RSVP Here

[kccccelebration25.eventbrite.com](https://kccccelebration25.eventbrite.com)



## KCCC Annual Celebration!

**Date:** January 9

**Time:** 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

**Location:** The Xperience by LuXury Escapes Event Venue, 145 Farmer's Alley, Kalamazoo.

Come and enjoy an evening full of fun and community in downtown Kalamazoo. This annual celebration is a time to come together, celebrate accomplishments, and take action. Enjoy live music, engaging speakers, and interactive activities. Connect with individuals and organizations who are passionate about protecting our planet. Let's celebrate our successes and inspire each other to keep fighting for a sustainable future. Click [HERE](#) to RSVP.

Hope for Creation invites you to:

## Faith. Climate. Action.

AN INTERFAITH GATHERING TO BUILD RESILIENCE AND WORK TOWARDS A CARBON ZERO FUTURE



**SATURDAY, FEB. 8, 2025**

1-4 PM WORKSHOPS AND DISCUSSION,  
MUSIC AND REFLECTION

4-5 PM SOCIAL HOUR WITH FOOD AND DRINKS  
Portage United Church of Christ (2731 Milham Ave)

**Save the Date!** Our environmental justice partners at [Hope for Creation](#) will host a **Faith. Climate. Action.** Interfaith Gathering on **Saturday, February 8** from **1-5 PM** at Portage United Church of Christ. Come and help build community resilience and fight climate change!

## Community Composting

The City of Portage is partnering with [My Green Michigan](#) to launch the Food Scraps Recycling Pilot Program starting the week of January 6, 2025—and it's FREE for Portage residents!

Here's how it works:

- ⇒ Collect food scraps in any container that works for you—like a lidded bowl, compostable bag, or countertop bin.
- ⇒ Drop off your scraps at one of 10 convenient locations across the city in bright lime green bins.
- ⇒ Watch your waste transform into nutrient-rich compost, reducing pollution, landfill waste, and methane emissions!

Drop-Off Locations: Westfield Park, Harbor West Park, Marlow Street Cul-de-sac, Portage Creek Bicentennial Park, Lakeview Park, Oakland Drive Park, Ramona Park, West Lake Nature Preserve, Schrier Park, and Lexington Green Park



# RACIAL HEALING



Over the course of five days, January 17-21, Kalamazoo will come alive with opportunities to connect, reflect, and take racial justice action. Through interactive events, dynamic activities, and powerful conversations, we will amplify the voices, practices, and stories that drive racial healing.

### The 5-Day Series: How We Heal

Aligned with the goals of the National Day of Racial Healing 2025, this transformative series offers daily opportunities to engage in healing and justice. In Kalamazoo, we heal by...

- **Reflection:** Creating guided moments to pause, process, and deepen our understanding of personal and collective healing through activities like racial healing circles, reflective journaling, and sharing stories in safe spaces.
- **Education:** Engaging in workshops and dialogues that explore racial equity, community resilience, and actionable steps toward justice.
- **Art:** Using creative expressions like painting, poetry, dance, and performance as pathways to healing and transformation.
- **Storytelling:** Amplifying diverse narratives through activities honoring truth, resilience, and cultural richness.
- **Connection:** Building meaningful relationships through interactive events, including healing circles and community dialogues that foster empathy and unity.

View the Full Schedule of Events: [mitransformation.org/community-events/](http://mitransformation.org/community-events/) and join the movement for racial healing!

Interested in learning more about how to dismantle systemic racism in our congregation and the wider community? Check out our upcoming workshop opportunities listed below and register today.

Learn more about ERAACE at [www.eracce.org](http://www.eracce.org). Questions? Reach out to [eracce@eracce.org](mailto:eracce@eracce.org)

**ERAACE**  
Dismantling Racism & Creating/Celebrating Equity

**JOIN US!**  
UPCOMING 2025  
**Workshops**

<b>INTRODUCTION TO SYSTEMIC RACISM</b>	<b>JANUARY 8</b>
Location: Kalamazoo 9am-5pm	
<b>UNDERSTANDING &amp; ANALYZING SYSTEMIC RACISM</b>	<b>JANUARY 15-17 &amp; 22-24</b>
Hosted on Zoom 1 - 4pm each day	
<b>INTRODUCTION TO SYSTEMIC RACISM</b>	<b>FEBRUARY 12-13</b>
Hosted on Zoom 1pm - 4pm each day	
<b>INTERNALIZATION OF RACISM (IRO/IRS) SESSION</b>	<b>FEBRUARY 26</b>
Location: Lansing 9am - 4pm	

Register today at [eracce.org/event-registration](http://eracce.org/event-registration): 

Questions? Email [eracce@eracce.org](mailto:eracce@eracce.org)

### Honor MLK with a Day of Service!



Join the Volunteer Center of Greater Battle Creek and Kalamazoo and the City of Kalamazoo in this annual day of service, Monday, **January 20** from **7 AM—4 PM**. Visit [gryphon.org/events/mlk-day-of-service-4](http://gryphon.org/events/mlk-day-of-service-4) to find out more!

# RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION



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

Happy New Year, Friends! Whatever 2025 brings, I truly believe we are better off facing it together than on our own. Thank you for your continued support of UUC. Thank you for showing up again and again wholly, authentically, lovingly, carrying kindness, gentleness and hope. Here are my wishes for all of us (with thanks to Rev. Beth Monhollen, minister of the UU Church of Urbana-Champaign for providing the perfect words.)

*In this new year, may we leave behind the weight of unfulfilled resolutions, of unrealized dreams, and of unrealistic expectations.*

*May we unpack the heavy weight of stories that tell us we are unworthy and unlovable.*

*May we remember that we each carry inside of us a spark of the Divine.*

*In this new year,*

*May we carry kindness, gentleness and hope that hold us through even the hardest days and the most daunting risks.*

*May we carry the weight of memory that reminds us of who we are, and the weight of spirit that reminds us we are still becoming.*

*May we carry the seed of knowledge that teaches us that improvement and growth aren't linear and individualistic but are cyclical and communal.*

*May we carry the wisdom to seek rest and connection, to lean into mutual care.*

*May we carry the certain belief that when we have patterns of thinking and behaving that harm ourselves and others, we can seek resources that will help us move towards healing.*

*May we carry the knowledge that happiness and success take many shapes and one of those shapes is purpose.*

*May we carry purpose lightly, trusting that it changes and evolves and surprises us.*

*May we carry curiosity, wonder, and the ability to be surprised.*

*This year, may we carry space for all of our flaws, all of our longings, and all of our love, remembering that the truly daring adventure of life is not to be better-better-best! but to show up wholly, authentically, lovingly as ourselves.*

*May we carry these prayers and carry each other into the new year.*

*May it be so.*

DATE	VOLUNTEERS	<b>Our January RE Exploration classes will focus on Empathy and Compassion, exploring how these qualities help us keep Love at the heart of everything we do. The children will have opportunities to engage in service projects that bring their values to life. Our highschoolers will host a Drag Show on January 18.</b>
January 5	Isaac Epskamp-Hunt	
January 12	Eric and Regena Nelson	
January 19	Pat Timm	
January 26	Mary Roscoe	

# WELCOMING CONGREGATION



Join us for a night of fun, fabulousness, and family-friendly entertainment at the **Unitarian Universalist Community Church** in **Portage, MI** on **Saturday, January 18th!** This **all-ages drag show** is designed to bring together people of all backgrounds for an unforgettable evening filled with dazzling performances, positive vibes, and community celebrations.

Expect to be wowed by talented drag performers who will light up the stage with energetic routines, colorful costumes, and interactive fun. Whether you're new to drag shows or a longtime fan, this event offers something for everyone—kids, teens, and adults alike!



### Event Details:

**Date:** Saturday, January 18th

**Doors Open:** 5:00 PM

**Show Starts:** 6:00 PM

**Admission:** RSVP for FREE TICKETS [tinyurl.com/uuccdragshow2025](https://tinyurl.com/uuccdragshow2025)



Bring your family, friends, and neighbors for a night of acceptance, joy, and entertainment. This is more than just a show—it's a celebration of community, self-expression, and the power of inclusion.

### Drag-tastic Night Ahead!

This will be a celebration of joy, acceptance, and fabulous performances you won't soon forget. Bring your friends, family, and best dance moves—we'll bring the sparkle!





# JANUARY 2025



DAY	DATE	EVENT	TIME
Wednesday	January 1	HAPPY NEW YEAR	All Day
Thursday	January 2	Stewardship Committee Meeting	1:00 PM
Saturday	January 4	Qigong Game Gathering	9:00 AM 1-4 PM
Sunday	January 5	Letter to Self with Rev Gy UU Exploration for Kids	10:00 AM 10:00 AM
Tuesday	January 7	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	January 8	Sunday Services Committee Meeting Board of Trustees Meeting	5:30 PM 7:00 PM
Friday	January 10	Women's Book Group	1:00 PM
Saturday	January 11	Qigong	9:00 AM
Sunday	January 12	It is All a Choice with Rev. Gy UU Exploration for Kids Program Council	10:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:20 AM
Monday	January 13	Mindful Living with Eric	7:00 PM
Tuesday	January 14	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	January 15	Civil Conversations Group	7:00 PM
Thursday	January 16	Growth Team Meeting	12:00 PM
Saturday	January 18	Qigong 3rd Saturday Breakfast Group All-Ages Drag Show	9:00 AM 9:00 AM 6:00 PM
Sunday	January 19	Sharing Grief with Rev. Gy UU Exploration for Kids UU History (Session 1)	10:00 AM 10:00 AM 12:30 PM
Monday	January 20	We Gather in Hope (at Portage United Church of Christ) Sustainability Group	6:00 PM 7:00 PM
Tuesday	January 21	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	January 22	NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	12:00 PM
Thursday	January 23	Thoughtful Thursday with Sue Riley	7:00 PM
Saturday	January 25	Qigong Mid-Year Board Retreat	9:00 AM 10:00 AM
Sunday	January 26	Project 2025 with John Hoadley UU Exploration for Kids Birthday Potluck for Betty Lee Ongley UU History (Session II)	10:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:00 AM 12:30PM
Monday	January 27	Mindful Living with Eric	7:00 PM
Tuesday	January 28	Qigong	7:00 PM
Wednesday	January 29	Spiritual Growth Group (closed group)	6:30 PM

# Happy New Year!

**UU Community Church  
is served by:**

Rev. Gy Ludvig-McCartney M.Div., M.A.  
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**2024-2025 Board of Trustees**

**Steve Tasko**

**Kathryn Ragains-Wilson**

**Pat Fuehr**

**Mike Graham**

**Eric Nelson**

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

Please send submissions to:  
**[uuccnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:uuccnewsletter@gmail.com)**

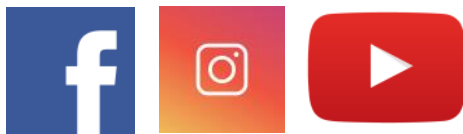
*CommUUnity Matters*

**Unitarian Universalist Community Church  
of Southwest Michigan**

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



**CONNECT WITH US!**



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