



CommUUunity Matters

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest Michigan

April 2025

APRIL SUNDAY SERVICES

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

April 6: *Better Together* with Rev. Gy

Rev. Gy will reflect on the ways that taking action, building coalitions, and collaborating with others bring out the best in us.

Click [HERE](#) or visit tinyurl.com/uuccthebest to register.

April 13: *Recovery is Possible* with the RI Power Group

Recovery Institute of SW Michigan (RI) is a nonprofit that provides peer support to those in recovery from addictions and mental illnesses. Three RI members will speak about what RI does and their own successful journeys toward health, wellness and hope.

Click [HERE](#) or visit tinyurl.com/uuccrecovery to register.

April 21: *Say Yes!* with Rev. Gy and Miriam

When Easter and Stewardship Sunday fall on the same date, it invites us to say "Yes!" to new beginnings. "Yes!" to a fresh start. "Yes!" to miracles. "Yes!" to recommitting ourselves again (and again) to what we hold most sacred. Put on your Easter bonnets and join us for a joy-filled Easter Sunday celebration!

Click [HERE](#) or visit tinyurl.com/uucyyes to register.

April 27: *Powering Change* with Erin Augustine

Oatly, the oat milk company, exists to help people live healthier lives without recklessly taxing the planet's resources in the process, and to change the food system for the better. Erin, Vice President of Sustainability for Operations and Supply Chain, will talk about how Oatly has baked sustainability into its brand identity, Oatly's climate goals and decarbonization plans, and how consumer-led actions can help companies continue (or start) to prioritize sustainability and transform the food system.

Click [HERE](#) or visit tinyurl.com/uucoatmilk to register.



Spiritual Theme for April EXPANDING

During the course of this church year, we are exploring how we can ground our daily personal and collective choices in Love. In March, we will explore taking action, building coalitions, and collaboration.

Brother Cornel West reminds us that "*justice is what love looks like in public.*" The world needs Unitarian Universalists to show up for justice outside our church walls with spiritual grounding, generosity, humility, courage, and concrete skills. To be effective in our justice work, we need to listen deeply with empathy and without defensiveness. We need to connect with others whose values and goals align with ours to build a more resilient community. We need to prioritize relationships over efficiency and act in solidarity with those most impacted by injustice.

Questions to ponder this month:

What role can I play in helping to build a Beloved Community that benefits us all?

What skills do I need to master to ensure that my activism is inclusive and respectful?

GUESTS IN THE PULPIT

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



The PoWeR (People of Wellness and Recovery) Group is an ongoing group at the Recovery Institute of Southwest Michigan made up of people in recovery who share their stories with the public. Their mission is to fight stigma and educate the community in colleges, high schools, hospitals, treatment centers, and other places throughout southwest Michigan.

Erin Augustine lives with her husband, two kids, some dogs, and chickens in Rockford, Michigan. Erin has a bachelor's degree in environmental engineering from Northwestern University. She has worked in environmental education, non-profit, environmental consulting, and corporate sustainability roles. Erin joined Oatly, the oat milk company, in August 2021. When time allows she shares her family's sustainability journey on the Carbon Free Family website. Her first visit to UUCC in 2020 sparked the creation of our Sustainability Group which is still going strong!



Our **Thoughtful Thursday** guest on **April 24 at 7 PM** via Zoom will be **Jenny Doezema, Executive Director of the Kalamazoo Climate Crisis Coalition (KCCC)**. Formed in the summer of 2019 in response to the Global Climate Strike led by youth climate activist, Greta Thunberg, KCCC is a coalition of individuals and organizations (including UUCC) that is engaged in collective action to achieve immediate and drastic reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and rapid adoption of renewable energy through a transition grounded in social, racial, economic, and environmental justice.

Ahead of her virtual visit, Ms Doezema invites us to consider:

What are we building? How are we leaning into the coming storm? What does it look like to steady ourselves so we might help our neighbors? How do we build resilience into our communities? What does the world we want to live in look like?

KCCC believes that Climate Change and Justice Work must be tied together as we build this path, as we answer these questions. KCCC steps into action with the intention of moving in strong collaboration with local partners to shrink historic disparities while we put our hearts into weaving emissions reduction, housing, jobs creation, economic investment, and shelter for coming storms into a round-shaped program for the people of Kalamazoo. The time to build Climate Resilience is here.

Click [HERE](#) or visit tinyurl.com/uccbuildresilience to register for this Thoughtful Thursday.

If you cannot attend this event in real-time, you can sign up to receive a recording of the event by filling out the Zoom registration form.

RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION



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

It’s that time again—stewardship season at UUC! Simply put, stewardship means taking care of the things we love.

Think about the times UUC has been there for you. Maybe it was a warm hug or a kind word when you needed it most. Maybe it was a Sunday service that gave you just the right inspiration to keep going. Maybe it was a gathering of kindred spirits who just “get” you. All of that—every bit of it—is here because the folks before us said “Yes!” They said “Yes!” to sharing their time, their talent, and their treasure to build and support this community.

Now, it’s our turn. As Rev. Dr. Brandoch L. Lovely puts it in Reading #674 in our hymnal, “*We now are the keepers of the dream.*” It is our turn to say “Yes!” to making sure UUC remains a welcoming place for seekers, dreamers, and doers. “Yes!” to keeping our doors open, our programs thriving, and our outreach strong. “Yes!” to supporting our staff, our social justice efforts, and our commitment to equity, inclusion, and the transformative power of love.

All of us play an important part. Every pledge makes a difference. It’s not just about numbers; it’s about saying “Yes!” to something that truly matters.



I’d like to hope that you think the work we do downstairs in our Religious Exploration classes is something that truly matters and is worth supporting. The kids had a great time last month thinking about *Acceptance* with the help of a platypus who looks like no other animal on earth but still deserves to live a long and happy life, the Sneetches who lost all their money before



they learned not to treat people unkindly, and Molly Lou Melon who felt so good about herself that the unkind words and actions of others didn’t matter so much. They had fun playing with playdough, making ooblek, constructing paper platypuses and positivity shields, tasting croissants, building structures with marshmallows and toothpicks, and bouncing ping pong balls! If any of these things sound like fun to you too, please consider helping out one Sunday a month in our Religious Exploration classes. We could use a few extra volunteers.

In April the kids, of course, will learn about *Stewardship* and explore the different ways we say “Yes!” and take care of the things we love—including our bodies and minds, our UU congregation, our community, and our planet. The kids are also invited to stay upstairs on Easter Sunday for a multi-generational Sunday service and an Easter Egg Hunt.



APRIL RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION SCHEDULE	
DATE	VOLUNTEERS
April 6	Pat Timm
April 13	Regena and Eric Nelson
April 20	Multi-generational Service
April 27	Mary Roscoe



STEWARDSHIP



Pledge materials will arrive in your mailbox the first week of April, detailing how **YOU can SAY "YES!"** to supporting UUCC's mission and activities for the upcoming church year. Please return your pledge cards by **April 20** so we can finalize the budget for the next church year. Your pledge is a way to express your gratitude for UUCC and help secure its future.

Join us on **Saturday, April 26**, for a joyful in-person dinner as we **celebrate** the pledge results! We want to express our heartfelt appreciation for the many ways you enrich UUCC with your time, talents, and resources. **Everyone is invited** to this festive occasion! Childcare will be available, and we'll also provide transportation to help you join in on the fun.

Check out the details below!



**Celebration of Community and Generosity
Saturday, April 26, 2025 at UUCC**



5:00 PM – Time for socializing with an assortment of beverages

5:45 PM – Welcome address by Reverend Gy

6:00 PM – Dinner – chicken or chickpeas served with "Marry Me Sauce," rice, salad, and bread

6:30 PM – Enjoy dessert and play Bingo with "fabulous" prizes for the winners

7:00 PM – Announcement of pledge results

Click [HERE](#) to RSVP. Please respond by April 20.



LEADERSHIP

The Board of Trustees met on March 11. Here are a few of the things they accomplished:



- Reviewed the **proposed budget** for the 2025/2026 church year
- Voted to **donate \$200** from the Board's Discretionary Fund to WMU's Lewis Walker Institute's Youth Juvenile Justice Fellowship
- Discussed appointing **delegates to the UUA General Assembly**, June 18-22

Click [HERE](#) to read the minutes from the March meeting. The next regular Board meeting will take place via Zoom on **Wednesday, April 2 at 6:30 PM**. The Board may go into a **closed session** for the last 30 minutes of the meeting to discuss staff compensation. **Visitors are welcome to attend until that time.** The Zoom link can be found on the UU Community Church [online calendar](#).

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](#).



April Generosity Giving

Our Generosity Sunday recipient for April is the **Recovery Institute of Southwest Michigan**. While offering a wide range of classes, groups, individual coaching, and social services support for people who are experiencing substance use or mental health diagnoses, the Recovery Institute is also a place to just come and hang out. But as the only peer-run, peer-directed recovery center in the county, it's also so much more. Partnering with more than 20 agencies in the community, the Recovery Institute is helping create a culture of peer-directed recovery and de-stigmatization of substance use and mental health issues throughout the county. The Institute's reach is wide, but its mission is simple: instilling hope and providing a path to self-management and wellness for those seeking recovery.

There are several ways to give to our special collection for the Recovery Institute

- You can place a check made out to UUCC 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 13** to the Recovery Institute.

Supporting our Generosity Sunday recipients is a way to live our UU values in the world! If it is yours to do, we invite you to give generously to our special collection for the Recovery Institute. Imagine the impact if just 10 UUCC members each contributed \$100—together, we could **make a real difference in people's lives!** Every donation, no matter the size, helps bring hope and support to those in need. Please also help spread the word—anyone can contribute and be part of this meaningful effort. Let's come together to create lasting change!

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 13**. 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, Wendy Fields, Min. Dr. Karika Parker, and Norm Bober. Russell Bishop**, author of *From Self Talk to Soul Talk*, joined us for an insightful Thoughtful Thursday conversation. 16 people attended the **February Renewal Retreat**. Many thanks to **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 UCC folks stopped by to chat with the NAACP Kalamazoo branch President **Wendy Fields** and Veteran Affairs Chairperson, **Anthony Bradley**. Rev. Gy participated in **We Gather in Hope**, a post-inaugural community worship service. Five UCC folks attended **Hope for Creation's Climate.Faith.Action.** workshop. And, thanks to **Dave and Teri Uttermohlen**, we hosted a fun **Super Bowl Party** too. Together, we are doing great things!

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

Spread the good news about UCC programs: There are always flyers for some of our upcoming events on the table at the back of the Please take one to post on community bulletin boards and in shop windows to let folks know what we are doing.

Like, Comment, and Share: If you have social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram, BlueSky, or YouTube be sure to stop by UCC's account to like, comment, and share our posts to help more people see the amazing things we are doing.

Open Doors Community Meal: Earlier this year UCC (with the support of the Program Council) volunteered to partner with Open Doors Kalamazoo to put on a community meal in April. The meal will be served on **Sunday, April 13**. Many UCC **volunteers will be needed** to make this event a success. See page 13 for more information.

The next Program Council Meeting is coming up this **Sunday, April 13** at around **11:20 AM**.

Please plan to join us and help keep UCC's programs going strong! If you have any questions about Program Council or items to add to the agenda, contact Kathryn Ragains-Wilson.

*Open your heart to the abundance
that surrounds and sustains us.*



CARING COMMUNITY



APRIL CARING COMMUNITY NEWS

April is a reminder that life is a beautiful, ever-renewing cycle.

— E.E. Cummings

Joys, Concerns, and Member News:

We seem to be under a dark cloud recently with so many people suffering from serious health issues or succumbing to one of the many viruses going around. We are sending healing thoughts and prayers to all UCC folks struggling with health issues—**Bev Folz** recovering from a recent hospitalization.; **Rev. Gy** recovering from a procedure to patch a hole in their spinal dura; **Barb McWhorter** suffering from a broken arm; **Bob McWhorter's** ongoing struggles with the after-effects of a stroke; **Carol Higgin's mother Joyce** recovering from a recent hospitalization and suffering from a bone fracture; **Kris Nichols** recovering from surgery; **Mike Leatherman** recovering from quadruple bypass surgery; **Mary Roscoe** experiencing heart issues; **Isaac Epskamp-Hunt's father David** suffering from ongoing heart issues.

In happier news, **Luke Kritzman** was recently elected President of the WMU Student Body. He will be sworn into office in April. **Joel Folkert** announced that he was accepted into the KVCC Wind Turbine Technician program. His studies start in July and he is very excited about the new direction his life is taking. **Kevin Brozovich** began a new job with Micro-Lam in Portage. We also heard the good news that former UCC kid, **Laura Wheeler** is getting married to **Scott David** in May. (Scott has a [handyman business](#) in Kalamazoo if anyone would like to support a UU adjacent business!)

Birthdays:

A very Happy Birthday goes out to all of our April babies: 1 -**Barbara Bott**, 5 – **Stace Danielson**, 8- **Ryan Brozovich**, 12 - **Nancy Crowell**, - **Patti Ludvig-McCartney**, 16- **Kelin Michael**, 17- **Freya Lake**

Welcome Visitors:

We were delighted to welcome over **20 first time first-time visitors** to UCC in March both onsite and online! There are too many names to list here but we were so happy that each and everyone of you stopped in to visit. 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 uucommunity@gmail.com.



CONNECTION

Women's Book Group

Friday, April 11
1 PM via Zoom

April Selection:

Poverty By America

By Matthew Desmond



From This Is a Bookstore:

The United States, the richest country on earth, has more poverty than any other advanced democracy. Why? Why does this land of plenty allow one in every eight of its children to go without basic necessities, permit scores of its citizens to live and die on the streets, and authorize its corporations to pay poverty wages?

In this landmark book, acclaimed sociologist Matthew Desmond draws on history, research, and original reporting to show how affluent Americans knowingly and unknowingly keep poor people poor. Those of us who are financially secure exploit the poor, driving down their wages while forcing them to overpay for housing and access to cash and credit. We prioritize the subsidization of our wealth over the alleviation of poverty, designing a welfare state that gives the most to those who need the least. And we stockpile opportunity in exclusive communities, creating zones of concentrated riches alongside those of concentrated despair. Some lives are made small so that others may grow.

The Book Group meets at 1 PM on April 11 for a short business meeting and a discussion of the book led by Judy Halseth. Click [HERE](#) to join the Book Group. Contact Stephanie (sargg.64@gmail.com) if you have questions!

1st Saturday Game Gathering



The April 5 Saturday Game Gathering has been **CANCELED** due to a conflict with Euchre Night. (See page 9 for more info.) The next Game Gathering will be on **May 3 at 1 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. Meet-

ing 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 19** at **9:00 AM** at the Rooster's Call at 9136 Shaver Road in Portage.

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

CONNECTION



Larry and Carol Higgins are hosting a **Euchre Night** at UCC on **Saturday, April 5** 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. (If you purchased this event at the Auction you are all set.)
- ♦ If you need childcare, please contact the office and we will arrange for a sitter.

Don't miss this opportunity for fun and fellowship!

Disclaimer: This Euchre Night is strictly for fun and friendly competition! No gambling, wagering, or monetary stakes of any kind are involved.



Join us for Easter Fun!

Come and enjoy **Easter Sunday (April 20)** with your UCC family. Rev. Gy and Miriam are working together on a joy-filled **multi-generational service** so people of all ages can be together. Everyone is encouraged to wear their **finest spring or Easter bonnet** (both serious fashion and quirky homemade creations are welcome.) There will be a parade during the service to show off your finery. And, folks of all ages will have an opportunity to **hunt for Easter eggs** too!



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

This spring we hope to sing on **May 11** for Flower Communion and **June 8** for Religious Education Sunday.

All you need to do to add your voice to our song is **meet Luke at the piano at 9 AM**.

We will practice on the following Sundays: April 6, April 13, April 27, May 4, May 11, May 18, and June 1

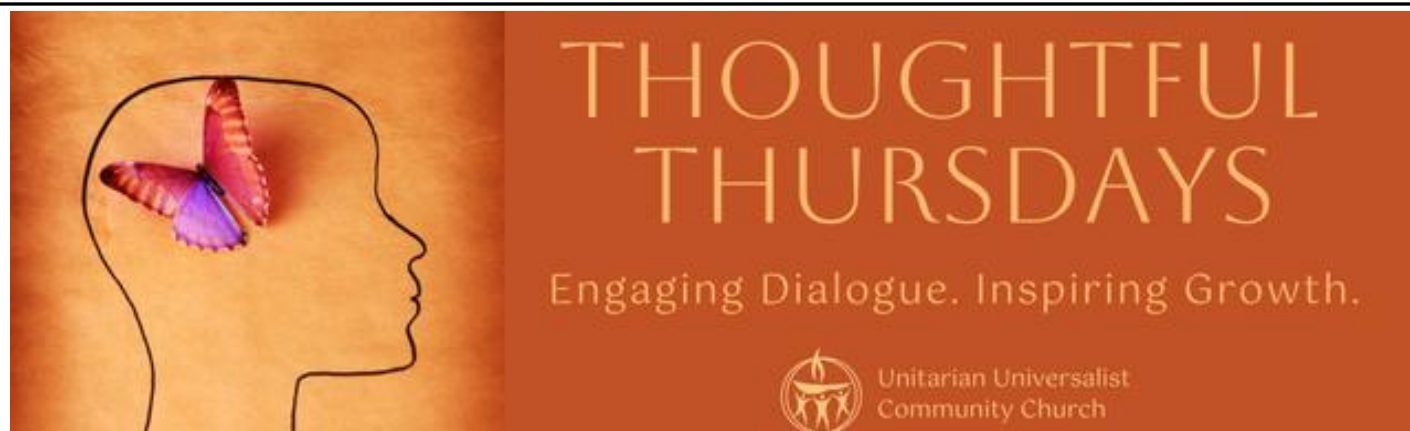
Other practices on other days of the week may be added if needed.

Questions?

Contact our Music Director,

Luke: luke.j.kritzman@wmich.edu

LEARNING AND GROWTH



Thoughtful Thursdays at UCC 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. 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.

April 24: Building Climate Resilience with Jenny Doezema



As the Vice President of Learning and Engagement at the Kalamazoo Nature Center, the Director of the Kalamazoo Climate Crisis Coalition, and co-chair of Kalamazoo County's Climate Action and Climate Justice Advisory Council, Jenny Doezema has extensive expertise on local environmental issues. She joins us in April to discuss meaningful actions we can take to more fully respect and protect the interconnected web of life of which we are a part.

Click [HERE](#) or visit tinyurl.com/uuccbuildresilience to register for this Thoughtful Thursday.

TBD May: with the Michigan Immigrants Rights Center



As deportations increase across the country and migrants in the U.S. face growing fear and uncertainty, we are hoping to host a representative from the Michigan Immigrant Rights Center (MIRC) this May. MIRC is a legal resource center dedicated to supporting Michigan's immigrant communities. During this Thoughtful Thursday, we will learn more about the challenges new Americans face in Michigan and explore ways to help build a thriving, inclusive state where immigrant communities experience equity and belonging.

If you cannot attend either 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.

June and July: We will take a break from Thoughtful Thursdays in June and July. Our speakers series will return in Fall 2025 with more thought-provoking topics and interesting guests for you to enjoy!

SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

Small Groups at UCC 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 Wednesday, **April 16** at **7 PM**.

Click [HERE](#) to register or visit tinyurl.com/uuccCivilConvosApr25

Mindful Living



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.

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

Sustainability Group

Members of the UCC 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.



The Sustainability Group would like to invite everyone to their next meeting on **Monday, April 21** for a thought-provoking discussion about how behavioral science can help us fight the climate crisis. The group will be joined by special guest, **Susan Schneider, Ph.D.**, an adjunct professor at Western Michigan University, climate activist, behavioral psychologist, and award-winning author of *The Science of Consequences*, who will help us explore how we can **shift behaviors to drive meaningful climate action**.

Click [HERE](#) to join Zoom Meeting.

Or visit tinyurl.com/uuccSustainabilityGroupApr25 to register for the Zoom link.

The Sustainability Group would also like to invite everyone to celebrate Earth Month in April with their **30-Day Sustainability Challenge**. Go to page 12 to learn more!

LEARNING AND GROWTH



The Sustainability Group at the Unitarian Universalist Community Church in Portage, Michigan challenges YOU to explore some ways that you can live more gently on planet Earth with a **30-Day Sustainability Challenge!**

Sign up for the challenge and each Sunday between April 20 and May 20, you will receive an email with things to read, watch, and do that will inspire you to practice more healthy and sustainable habits.

To sign up:

Visit tinyurl.com/uccsustainabilitychallenge or use your smartphone to access the QRC at the top of this page.

Whether you are new to the idea of sustainability or a green living veteran, the 30-Day Sustainability Challenge will provide you with food for thought and ideas for action!

The Unitarian Universalist Community Church hopes you take this opportunity to take personal action and join the global movement to fight climate change. Together, **we can make a positive impact on our precious planet!**

Questions? Contact Miriam at uucommunity@gmail.com

 A flyer for a Spring Mindfulness Retreat. It features a photo of Eric Nelson, a man with glasses and a cap. The text reads: 'Spring Mindfulness Retreat', 'Saturday, April 19', '10:00 AM - 3:00 PM', 'Join us for a FREE half-day mindfulness meditation retreat with Eric Nelson.', 'UCC SANCTUARY | 10441 SHAVER ROAD | PORTAGE, MI', 'REGISTER AT: [HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/SPRINGRETREATUU25](https://tinyurl.com/springretreatuu25)'. There is a small logo in the bottom left corner.

As the season shifts into spring, Eric Nelson invites you to a FREE half-day Spring Mindfulness Retreat on Saturday, **April 19**, from **10 AM to 3 PM**.

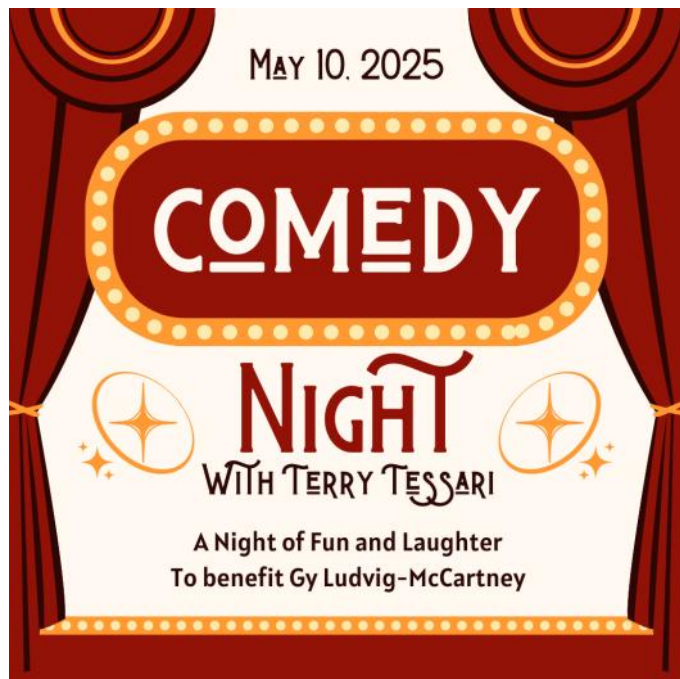
This retreat offers an opportunity for reflection and renewal through mindfulness practices tailored to the season, including Gentle Movement, Mindful Breathing, Reflective Meditation, and Cultivating Inner Harmony.

Designed to foster balance and growth, these practices encourage a deeper connection to the energy of spring.

Bring a lunch. Coffee and tea will be provided. Space is limited—register now to reserve a spot. Register here:

tinyurl.com/SpringRetreatUU25

OPPORTUNITIES



Comedy Night Committee

Terry Tessari, a long-time friend of UCC, reached out to the Board earlier this year with a proposal to hold a Comedy Night fundraising event to bring Rev. Gy a little relief from the substantial medical debt they have accrued over the last few years. The board gave their blessing to Terry's gracious offer and a show of hands at a Program Council meeting indicated that many UCC folks were willing to help plan the event on **Saturday, May 10**.

With only six weeks until this event, it is time to start planning in earnest. If you were one of the folks who said they would help, please plan to come to Comedy Night Committee Meeting, following Coffee Hour on **Sunday, April 6**. We will start brainstorming all the things that will need to be done to make this a successful event and start dividing up the work.

If you can't make it on April 6 but would like to be part of the Comedy Night Committee, please contact Miriam at:

uucommunity@gmail.com

UCC Hosts Dinner for Open Doors Residents on April 13

For over 50 years, Open Doors has been dedicated to providing affordable homes and creating long-term solutions to the housing crisis in our community.

Open Doors' residents include people who are working two jobs at minimum wage but don't earn enough to afford an apartment, who are fleeing domestic violence and have no resources for safe housing, who find themselves unexpectedly unemployed, who are left without resources after a divorce or other personal upheaval. While their circumstances are different, with affordable housing and personal support they can all reclaim their lives.



The staff at Open Doors has invited UCC to host a dinner for their residents on **Sunday, April 13** at **6 PM** at **Trinity Lutheran Church**, located at 504 S Westnedge Street. (Please note this is not the date we discussed at the March Program Council Meeting. Open Doors decided to change the date so there was not a conflict with Easter.)

We are looking for volunteers to contribute to this event by preparing dishes for the meal and assisting with serving. Your support will make a meaningful difference in creating a warm and welcoming experience.

Click [HERE](#) to sign up to volunteer by **April 9**.

If you have any questions about this volunteer opportunity, please contact Regena Nelson.

CELEBRATE EARTH MONTH



Celebrate Earth Day 2025 with local groups that are rooted in action. Bring your family and friends and help clean up Kalamazoo neighborhoods, plant trees, prepare communal gardens, get outdoors, and meet others in the community working to Renew Kalamazoo! There is a whole month of activities to choose from:

- April 5: Trash Love Kzoo Cleanup
- April 13: Riverfront Parks Beautification
- April 19: Earth Day Fun Run
- April 19: Vine Earth Day Celebration
- April 19: Edison Seed & Greet
- April 20: Earth Day Family Fun
- April 22: Wild Ones Guided Nature
- April 22: Albert White Literacy Trail Clean-Up
- April 26: Northside Cleanup
- April 26: Edison Tree Planting & Cleanup
- April 26: Museum Rain Garden Tours
- April 27: Native Garden Restoration

Visit kalamazooearthday.com for times, locations, and other event details.

At the Kalamazoo Earth Day website, you can also check out the locally produced [Connecting Communities Podcast](#) to learn about environmental and community-building work in Kalamazoo and ways you can help!



EPS Foam Recycling and More

Saturday, April 26
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 Demonstration

Our climate justice partner, [Hope for Creation](#) is teaming up with Allen Chapel AME Church and the [Kalamazoo Watershed Council](#) for a **rain barrel demonstration** on Saturday, **April 12**, from **10:30 AM- 1 PM** at **Allen Chapel AME Church**, 804 W. North St.

There is also an opportunity to do some garden work and come together for a meal and fellowship.

All are welcome!



Celebrate Earth Day at the KNC

Enjoy **FREE** admission to Kalamazoo **Nature Center's Visitor Center, trails, and exhibits** all day on **Saturday, April 26**. 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/

FROM THE MINISTER



From the Minister

Rev. Rachel Myslivy, UUA Climate Justice Organizer

Stress has deformed and compressed our planet's glorious body but what if size and shape can be recovered, nourished into a new flourishing?

Leah Ongiri, from "A Blessing for Resilience"

The climate crisis isn't happening in a vacuum. With attacks on Black lives, trans kids, and reproductive justice all in the face of increasing fascism and white supremacy, rampant gun violence, and ongoing pandemic, sometimes it feels like tragedy is everywhere all the time. And yet, so is love. So is courage. So is resilience.

Resilience, I think, is a value strongly held by climate justice activists all over the world. Several years ago, I attended a conference on Equitable Deep Decarbonization. The organizers had us break out into groups according to the 4 Rs of Organizing: Resist, Reform, Recreate, and Reimagine. In small groups, we drew pictures reflecting what we thought it meant to embody one of these values in climate justice organizing. Together, we explored how other values would shore up and strengthen these original four.

For much of my career, I've worked in Reform and Recreate. When I'm most enraged, I'm squarely in Resist. My heart is nourished when I rest and allow myself to Reimagine. All of these lay the foundation for Resilience. But our vision for climate equity isn't simply to survive. To realize a world without fossil fuels where clean energy is a human right and all communities thrive, we have a clear call: to follow BIPOC leadership, decarbonize and decolonize our relationships, and engage in transformative action. Climate justice requires us to understand who is most impacted by climate change, how, where, and in what ways, and then to not just orient our solutions to prioritize those issues, but to follow the leadership of frontline communities and to act in solidarity with the communities most impacted. The many systems of oppression that disproportionately harm marginalized groups are inextricably interlinked, chipping away at our fortitude, faith, and imagination. We see scarcity instead of abundance; we fear failure rather than celebrating resilience.

There's another way. As Nicole Pressley Director of the UUA's Organizing Strategy Team notes, *What if our commitment to 'building a new way' unequivocally included a practice of solidarity with those who are most at risk, most targeted?* The strength of "what if" is what helps us continue in this work.

And so, what is our resilient, loving way? It's Reforming energy policy to ensure that no one's power is shut off during extreme weather for lack of payment. It's Recreating the energy system to reject fossil fuels while rapidly advancing clean energy solutions for all. It's Resisting unjust systems that sacrifice communities and destroy Earth. It also means renewing our spirits and Reimagining a future where all thrive. It's Resilience that unites rather than divides. And we can do this together, today and always.

SUPPORT OUR YOUTH

OUR POWER, OUR PLANET!

CLIMATE MARCH & RALLY
FRIDAY, APRIL 18, 12-4

MARCH STARTING AT HERITAGE HALL AT 12
RALLY AT WMU'S CIRCLE W FROM 12-4

Our Power, Our Planet Climate March and Rally

Young people in our community are calling on us to join a march and rally on **Friday, April 18** from **12-4 PM** on the campus of **Western Michigan University** to show our community and our leaders that **urgent climate action** is needed now!

The event starts at noon at Heritage Hall. After the march, join the excitement at the rally! There will be a gathering on WMU's Circle W until 4 PM, with opportunities to get involved and take action, games, interactive activities, artful activism, music, and more!

This youth-organized event is being led by a growing coalition of organizations that includes: WMU Student leaders and organizations, the Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership, Michigan Student Power Alliance, the Ardea Youth Climate Coalition, Earth Day Network, and more!

Gala Benefit Fundraiser

WMU's Lewis Walker Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnic Relations will celebrate 35 years with a **gala fundraiser** in support of vital youth programs that empower students from diverse backgrounds on **Friday, April 11** from **6-10 PM** at the **WMU Student Center**.

They warmly invite all members of the community—students, educators, and advocates for social justice—to join them on this momentous occasion as they come together to champion understanding and advocacy in race and ethnic relations.

Tickets are \$75 per person

Click [HERE](#) or use the QR code on the graphic to learn more.

FRIDAY
APRIL 11, 2025
6-10PM

Tickets and Ads

35 YEARS
LEWIS WALKER INSTITUTE

GALA BENEFIT FUNDRAISER

SUPPORTING LWI YOUTH PROGRAMS

WMU Student Center | 170 Arcadia Loop | Kalamazoo, MI 49008

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
Lewis Walker Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnic Relations

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Kalamazoo, MI 49008
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FAITH IN ACTION

bit.ly/capday2025

CAPITOL DAY 2025

- MEET WITH LAWMAKERS
- YOUTH PANEL
- RALLY
- BUILD THE RESISTANCE

michigan united
JUSTICE AND DIGNITY

COMMUNITIES over CORPORATIONS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23, 2025
MICHIGAN STATE CAPITOL
Buses from Detroit, Saginaw, Flint & Grand Rapids!

MICHIGAN UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOCIAL JUSTICE NETWORK

Looking for ways to put your faith into action? Join folks from all over the state for **CAPITOL DAY - WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23 - LANSING**

Organized by Michigan United and partners including Michigan UU Social Justice Network this day of legislative advocacy has been organized to **demand government that puts people over profit and communities over corporations**. We're calling UUs from across Michigan to join together at the State Capitol to advocate for issues we're fighting for: **taxing wealth, getting big money out of politics, universal healthcare, reproductive freedom, and defending voter rights**.

Formal programming from 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

- Lobby meetings with key policymakers
- A youth panel
- A rally to demonstrate our power and solidarity

Never been to a Capitol / Lobby day before? Here's a chance to find out what takes place and be part of the action! Join our group of UUs and experience this event together. Bus transportation will be available from Detroit, Saginaw, Flint, and Grand Rapids.

Let's go UUs! Now's the time!

Click [HERE](#) or visit tinyurl.com/muusjnApril23 to let MUUSJN know you're going.

Watch for further information about meet-up points, messaging for conversations with policymakers, signs for the rally, parking, and other logistics.

Click [HERE](#) or visit bit.ly/capday2025 to access Michigan United's website for this event and reserve your spot on a bus.

IRISH CELEBRATION

MARCH 2025

UUCC IRISH CELEBRATION





APRIL 2024



DAY	DATE	EVENT	TIME
Tuesday	April 1	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	April 2	Board of Trustees Meeting	6:30 PM
Thursday	April 3	Stewardship Committee Meeting	1:00 PM
Saturday	April 5	Qigong UUCU Euchre Night	9:00 AM 6:00 PM
Sunday	April 6	Choir Practice <i>Better Together</i> with Rev. Gy and UU Exploration for Kids After-Service Social Time	9:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:00 AM
Wednesday	April 9	Sunday Services Committee Meeting	5:30 PM
Friday	April 11	Growth Team Meeting Women's Book Group	9:00 AM 1:00 PM
Saturday	April 12	Qigong	9:00 AM
Sunday	April 13	Choir Practice <i>Recovery is Possible</i> with the PoWeR Group and UU Exploration for Kids After-Service Social Time/Souper Sunday Program Council Meeting	9:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:00 AM 11:20 AM
Monday	April 14	Mindful Living with Eric	7:00 PM
Tuesday	April 15	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	April 16	Civil Conversation Group	7:00 PM
Saturday	April 19	Qigong 3rd Saturday Breakfast Group Spring Mindfulness Retreat	9:00 AM 9:00 AM 10:00 AM
Sunday	April 20	EASTER <i>Say Yes!</i> Multi-generational service with Rev Gy and Miriam After-Service Social Hour UUCU 30-Day Sustainability Challenge Begins	All Day 10:00 AM 11:00 AM 6:00 AM
Monday	April 21	Sustainability Group with special guest Dr. Susan Schneider	7:00 PM
Tuesday	April 22	EARTH DAY Qigong	Everyday 9:00 AM
Wednesday	April 23	Capitol Day—Legislative Advocacy in Lansing NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	9 AM-5PM 12:00 PM
Thursday	April 24	Thoughtful Thursday with Jenny Doezema	7:00 PM
Saturday	April 26	Qigong Stewardship Celebration	9:00 AM 6:00 PM
Sunday	April 27	Choir Practice <i>Powering Change</i> with Erin Augustine and UU Exploration for Kids After-Service Social Time	9:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:00 AM
Monday	April 28	Mindful Living with Eric	7:00 PM
Tuesday	April 29	Qigong	9:00 AM

**UU Community Church
is served by:**

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2024-2025 Board of Trustees

Steve Tasko

Kathryn Ragains-Wilson

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Eric Nelson

Mike Graham

**The next Newsletter Deadline is
Wednesday, April 23 at NOON**

Please send submissions to:

uuccnewsletter@gmail.com

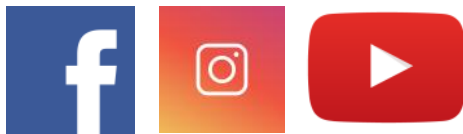
CommUUnity Matters

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