



CommUUunity Matters

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest Michigan

March 2026

MARCH SUNDAY SERVICES

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

March 1: *Determination*

with Rev. Gy

The word determination refers not only to the quality that makes you keep trying even when it is difficult, but also to the process of deciding what is right. Join us to learn how to make your yes mean yes and your no mean no, all while holding fast to your core values.

To register, visit tinyurl.com/uuccdetermined

March 8: *From Drops to a Deluge*

with Rev. Gy

On stewardship Sunday, we will celebrate how our shared generosity, of time, talent, and treasure, sustains our mission and helps love and justice flow. Each of our contributions is a drop. Together, we make it rain!

To register, visit tinyurl.com/uuccmakeitrain

March 15: *The Spaces Between*

with Fiona Dougherty

In recent decades, surveys have uncovered a growing population of Americans who don't identify with traditional religious institutions but still maintain a spiritual outlook in some way, shape, or form. They are the self-described 'Spiritual but not Religious' or SBNR for short. What does that identity really mean? Who is likely to be SBNR? What is research uncovering about their beliefs and attitudes?

To register or visit tinyurl.com/uuccsbnr

March 22:

The Transformative Power of Anti-Racism

with Manuel Bernal and Liis Lahti

We will be joined by facilitators from Eliminating Racism & Creating/Celebrating Equity to explore the dominant culture values and the transformative power of anti-racist values.

To register or visit tinyurl.com/uucceracce

March 29: *Strong and Determined*

with Rev. Gy

In honor of Women's History Month, we will hear about strong and determined UU women whose words and deeds challenge us to confront the powers and structures of inequity with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love.

To register or visit tinyurl.com/uuccwomen26



Spiritual Theme for March ERODING

Streams of Life, our spiritual theme for the 2025/2026 church year, invites us to explore what it means to be like water—together. There is an old truth hidden in nature's quiet persistence: a single drop of water, falling steadily over time, can carve through even the hardest stone. In March we will reflect on what lessons this aspect of water has for our lives.

In a culture that prizes speed and spectacle, water reminds us that real change often comes through steady commitment, quiet courage, and faithful presence. A single kindness. A consistent pledge. A habit of listening. A willingness to return again and again to love. What appears weak and insignificant in the moment is, in reality, an unstoppable force when given time and consistency.

When we act together—drop by drop—our shared efforts can shape a community of depth, resilience, and grace.

Questions to ponder:

What small actions can you take to build a stronger faith community at UUCC?

Where in your life might steady, faithful persistence create lasting transformation?

GUESTS IN THE PULPIT

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



Fiona Dougherty is a PhD candidate in the Department of Sociology at Western Michigan University. Her research interests are in sociology of religion, gender, spirituality, and health. Using qualitative methodologies, her research investigates social and cultural dynamics that shape emergent spiritual communities and identities insofar as they reject mainstream notions of religiosity and embody alternative spiritual narratives and meaning making practices. She is currently conducting analysis on research that will serve as her dissertation. Her work has been presented at professional conferences across disciplines and published in *Review of Religious Research*. She aims to continue weaving together academic perspectives that explore the causes and conditions of social and cultural change.

Manuel Bernal (he/him/his) is a Brown Mexican person with Indigenous roots with the Purépecha People in Michoacán Mexico. Manuel is an organizer & facilitator with ERACCE (Eliminating Racism and Creating/Celebrating Equity). He graduated with a BA in political science and MA in public policy from Indiana University. Manuel has worked as a facilitator for the men's battering intervention program at the Center for Nonviolence in Fort Wayne, Indiana where he helped unpack the internalization of violence in group settings and introduced nonviolent concepts for enduring nonviolent communication and behavior in relationships. Manuel has also worked as a community educator at the YWCA Northeast Indiana facilitating education on racial justice, domestic violence, and immigration. Manuel enjoys listening to resistance music.



Liis Lahti (he/him, they/them) grew up in central Michigan and now lives in Kalamazoo where he has been engaging in antiracism organizing with the local nonprofit, ERACCE (Eliminating Racism & Creating/Celebrating Equity) since 2009. He studied Comparative Religion and Environmental Studies at Western Michigan University. Liis is a skilled facilitator and is committed to the long term work of racial and social justice. Liis is a UU and longtime member of People's Church in Kalamazoo where he has been engaging in antiracism through committees and taskforces for 15 years. They apply an antiracist lens and analysis to all of the institutions they encounter and everywhere they go. Collective decision making is a practice he engages in as often as possible. Liis finds the work of antiracism to be humanizing and life-giving and is passionate about further exploring the intersections of identity. They became a parent in 2014 and loves being outside and teaching and learning with their two children.

FROM THE WIDER UU WORLD

Our guest perspective this month comes from the **Rev. Dr. Daniel C. Kantor's** sermon "Tomatoes for the Future," which won the [2019 UUA Program Fund Stewardship Sermon Award](#).



There is an old story about a man who was dying. He called his family in and said to them he believed they were wrong that he couldn't take it with him. So he instructed them to sell everything, and when he died, to bury him with the cash. They thought he was crazy but they did it. When he went up to the hereafter and the angels met him at the gates, he said, "Here I am, and here is all my money!" The angels told him cash didn't matter at all, they only took receipts.

I learned in my upper middle class family of six Christian Jewish Buddhist Unitarians that we gave away 10% of what we earned. How did that happen? We never were taught the traditional tithe. But my family always gave 5% to the Unitarian church that we belonged to and 5% to other organizations doing service and justice work we cared about. I learned this so firmly that I practice it today. But more than the math of percentages what I learned was that while some of my earnings are mine, ultimately it's the receipts that make a difference.

We don't have to go very far to know that generosity makes you feel better. We don't have to think too deeply to understand that what you do with your wealth is more important than the wealth itself. The University of Zurich did a study published in Time magazine where they found that those who had agreed to spend money on other people tended to make more generous decisions throughout the experiment compared to those who had agreed to spend on themselves. They also had more interaction between the parts of the brain associated with altruism and happiness, and they reported higher levels of happiness after the experiment was over. The same study showed that generosity promotes health, reduces stress, makes you live longer, and have lower blood pressure.

I have often pondered the effects of generosity on myself. I have had times when life was very difficult for me and once I called my father in the midst of a crisis and he told me, "Give something significant away." And I did and it was the right medicine for that moment. And I think those generous acts grow in us...the coffee you bring to your co-worker, the door held for a stranger, the donation to a cause. They not only make us feel good, but they can change us. They live long after we do, and alter the world in unexpected ways.

A pledge is a promise you make to help create this place...a place of wise minds, truth speaking, loving hearts, and helping hands. If everyone here did what I do (a few of you do) and pledge 5% of your income, this place would explode with possibility. That could be your guide, or just giving what you can, but making it feel good is also a guide. What I'm saying today is that the giving is important. But what is more important is the impact of joining a mission to create revolutions of spirit that last longer than a political term, to combat despair, lift up those in need, march in streets for justice, and challenge the status quo with love. Will what we do embody a spirit that we can pass down? There is no one but us. We are the ones who can make this church thrive.

STEWARDSHIP



March is Stewardship Month

From little drops to a mighty deluge, TOGETHER, our shared stewardship sustains the living waters of this congregation. Each generous gift of time, talent, and treasure flows together to keep UUCC a beacon of love and hope in a hurting world. Let each of us do our part to sustain and grow this beloved community!

Pledge Drive

Pledge materials will arrive in your mailbox this month, detailing how you can support UUCC's mission and activities for the upcoming church year. **Please return your pledge cards by March 29** 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!

A Legacy of Love

On **Sunday, March 15**, following the service, you can explore how your stewardship of UUCC can continue beyond your lifetime. Certified financial planner, **Sandy Derby**, will be on hand to answer any questions you have about planned giving and offer suggestions on how you can create a lasting legacy of love at UUCC.

Celebration of Generosity

Save the date for a **Celebration of Generosity** on **Saturday, April 11**. We will gather in person for a joyful dinner as we celebrate the pledge results and express our heartfelt appreciation for the many ways our UUCC family enriches this community with their time, talents, and resources.

\$ Budget Conversations \$

The Board of Trustees is developing a proposed budget for the 2026–2027 church year. As they look ahead to UUCC's future, they can see both significant challenges and unique opportunities.

To help guide their work, the Board will set up several opportunities for members and friends to share their budget priorities and creative ideas, with a goal of ensuring our community has the resources needed to live fully into our mission and vision for many years to come.

The first Budget Conversation will take place during the March Program Council meeting on **Sunday, March 8** following our soup luncheon. Please plan to attend and share your thoughts with the Board!



Fundraising Fun!

Thank you to everyone who helped make **Beat the Winter Blues** a wonderful success! More than 50 people enjoyed a delicious dinner, good company, and wonderful music from Megan Dooley. Kudos to the Stewardship Committee—**Regena Nelson, Joe Calme, Ron Crowell, Marsha Laya, and Rev. Gy** for putting on such a great event!

CARING COMMUNITY

MARCH CARING COMMUNITY NEWS

Spring is nature's way of saying, 'Let's party!' – Robin Williams



Joys, Concerns, and Member News:

Health News

Dave Uttermohlen reports that he is doing well following surgery to remove a kidney. He shared that his oncologist has declared him cancer-free! This is such a relief to Dave and **Teri** and their family. May he continue to be healthy and happy in the coming years!

Nancy Crowell shares that the Crowell Family could use some good UU thoughts and prayers. Daughter-in-law **Mary** has been diagnosed with breast cancer and is suffering from a serious autoimmune disease. Son **Chris** recently began radiation for a recurring cancer.

Connie Cousins-Leatherman reports that **Mike's** health has stabilized a bit, giving them breathing room to think about other things than doctor's appointments and treatments for a change. Please continue to hold them in your thoughts and prayers.

Please send healing energy to **Kathryn Ragains-Wilson**, **Robin Chico's** grandmother, **Naomi**, **Ken VanEselstine**, and **Rev. Gy**, as they all suffer from health issues.

Jill Ongley checked in to let us know that her mother, **Betty Lee**, is working hard at OT and PT sessions twice a day and her ankle is slowly healing while in a boot. Go get 'em, Betty, for you always set us a good example! Cards and notes of support can be sent to Medilodge Portage, 7855 Currier Drive, C3-1, Portage, MI 49002

Joe and **Nancy Calme** were distressed last week when their dog, Oliver, had to receive emergency treatment. Nancy reports that he seems healed up now and is back to his goofy self, and ravenous after several days of not eating.

Automobile Mishaps – Be Careful Out There!

The icy driving conditions in February caused troubles for other UUCG folks. Both **Marsha Laya** and **Isaac Epskamp-Hunt** got into accidents that left their cars looking worse for wear. **Leslie Crowell** and her dad **Ron** were in fender benders recently; they are both ok, but their cars are not!

Happier Developments

Congratulations to **Amanda Nelson**, who has been accepted into the graduate program at WMU for Applied Behavior Analysis.

WMU's Urban Teacher Residency Program, developed by our very own **Dr. Regena Nelson**, has been awarded the 2026 Increasing Educator Diversity: Promising Practice Award by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE). Regena went to New Orleans at the end of February to pick up the award at an AACTE conference. Congratulations!

Birthdays:

March birthday babies include...

5 – **Pat Timm**, 9- **Erin Michael**, 9 – **Justin Wojciak**, 12- **Bruce Fetzer**, 10- **Olivia Russell**, 27- **Marcia Adams**

LEADERSHIP

In Memorium:

Take a moment this month to remember past members and friends who we have lost over the years:

Dori Gerritson, March 21, 1999

K. C. Kozminski, March 9, 2006

Jim King, March 20, 2021

Welcome New Visitors:

It has been lovely to meet new friends **Robin** and **Juniper**, **Marcy** and **Natalie**, **Cynthia** and **Mark**, **Erica**, **Michelle Gerringer**, **Peter Siever**, and **Jameson's brother Travis** (affectionately known as T) at our services in February. We hope you will join us 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



The Board of Trustees met on February 4 and 25. Here are a few of the things they accomplished:

- Continued their review of Board Policies
- Approved a one-day liquor license for the Beat the Winter Blues Event
- Began discussing the 2026/2027 Budget
- Appointed Dawn Renner as a UUCC delegate to General Assembly

Click [HERE](#) to read the minutes from their February 4 meeting. The minutes for the February 25 meeting will be available at a later date. The next regular Board meeting will take place via Zoom on **Wednesday, April 1, at 6:30 PM**. Board meeting dates may move around a bit this spring to accommodate board members' work schedules but the congregation will be given at least a week notice of any changes. 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](#).



UUA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

General Assembly (GA), the annual gathering of UUs, where we conduct business of the Unitarian Universalist Association, explore the theological underpinnings of our faith, and lean fully into our mission and principles, takes place online, **June 14-21**. The votes that GA delegates cast can have a huge impact on Unitarian Universalism. They determine our elected leaders, amend the by-laws and rules that govern our Association, and shape the justice work that we do as a movement. If you are interested in serving as a UUCC delegate, talk to a member of the Board of Trustees today!

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 **March 8**. We will meet following the service and you can participate either in person or on Zoom.

We had lots to **CELEBRATE** at our February Meeting:

We enjoyed great Sunday services from **Rev. Gy** in January. **Luke** put together our first-ever Music Sunday where lots of UCC folks shared songs with us. **Nancy and Joe Calme** organized a great tribute to **Betty Lee Ongley** in honor of her 100th birthday. We hosted a very hopeful Thoughtful Thursday conversation with **Hristina Petrovska** from KVCC Food Innovation Center. **UCC folks** participated in demonstrations, made phone calls, and attended organizational meetings to resist the immoral and unethical actions of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency. And we all stayed safe and warm during the frigid cold January weather!

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

- Many Stewardship activities taking place in March. (See page 4 for all the details.)
- Further resistance opportunities with Kalamazoo Indivisible, the Kalamazoo Immigrant Support Coalition, and the Michigan UU Social Justice Network
- Ways to serve UCC by joining the Greeting Team, the Growth Team, or helping out on the Sound Desk or with our Religious Exploration classes. (Thank you to **Alana Hilton**, who stepped up to volunteer for some of these things straight away!)

ON THE AGENDA for our March meeting is discussing our goals and priorities to help the board draft a budget for the 2026-2027 church year. Please plan to join us.

As always, **we will serve soup** before the Program Council meeting as a fundraiser for our youth programs. If it is yours to do, please put a donation into the basket and then help yourself to a bowl of delicious homemade soup served with bread and crackers. Contact **Mary Roscoe** (lizoflynn@gmail.com) if you are interested in donating a pot of soup.

Thank you for your support!



Come Dancing!

Kimberly Ridley is taking some lucky UCC Auction winners to the Oshtemo Grange Hall on **March 14** for an evening of **Contra Dancing**. If you would like to join the fun, come on down to the Grange at 3234 N 3rd St. Doors open at 6:30 PM. The skills class at 7 PM is absolutely essential for newcomers. Wear comfortable clothing and bring water to drink and a snack to share. *Admission by donation - suggested \$5 to \$20, cash or check only.*




AROUND THE BUILDING

Changes to Coffee Hour

Beginning March 1, our after-service social time will move to the parquet area at the back of the sanctuary. Beverages and snacks will be available on the table under the windows, and seating will be provided at the round tables nearby. We're making this change to create a more comfortable and accessible coffee hour for everyone. If you have any questions about the changes, please contact [Miriam](#).



Meal Ministry Work Day

 A group of volunteers will meet at UCC on **Thursday, March 12**, from **noon to 2 PM** to prepare some meals that will be stored in the freezer, ready to be given to UCC folks when the need arises—after a hospitalization or injury, a death in the family, or the arrival of a new family member, etc. If you can chop veggies or stir a pot, you are welcome to come and lend a hand! Contact [the office](#) if you have any questions.

Got Compost?

Now that the weather is warming up again, **the compost bin at UCC is open** for business! Feel free to bring your veggies scrap, coffee grounds, and other compostables with you each Sunday to place in the bin, located on the south side of the building. We should have some composted soil ready for people to pick up by the time planting season rolls around!



Join the Greeter Team

Interested in welcoming visitors and members on Sunday mornings? Come to one of our **Greeter Meet-Ups** to learn more about joining the team. Meet-ups will be held at **11:30 AM** in the **Community Room** on **March 1, 15, and 29**. The same information will be shared at each session; just choose the date that works best for you.

Learn More About UCC

If you're new and would like to learn more about UCC and how to get involved, join us for our **Newcomers Gathering at 6 PM** on **Wednesday, March 4**. Pizza will be provided. Please bring a dish to share and your beverage of choice. Childcare is available upon request.

Become an AV Tech

Want to help our Sunday services sound their best? Join our **Sound Desk Training** on **Friday, March 6**, at **11 AM** and learn the ins and outs of serving as a Sunday morning AV volunteer.

Got Questions?

If you would like to know more about any of these upcoming events, contact the office: uucommunity@gmail.com



We appreciate all of our amazing and dedicated volunteers! Thank you for all you do for UCC!



On the Art Wall

In March and April, we are excited to share photographs by former UCC kid, Marcus Ragains. Marcus has been pursuing a passion for professional photography since he was about 17 years old. He especially enjoys using urban scenery and automobiles as his subjects.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Hope for Creation invites you to



**Faith.
Climate.
Action.**

Saturday, March 21, 1-5 pm

Workshops and discussion 1-4;
Networking and social hour from 4-5

Workshops

Quyên Edwards-- Start Small: An Introduction to Native Plants

Steve Wasko-- Resilient Together: Faith Communities as Climate Resilience Hubs

Nancy Hoy Nott-- Poetry as Action: Exploring Climate Change Through Reading and Writing About Nature



Portage United Church of Christ
(2731 Milham Ave)
Learn more and RSVP using the
QR code or at hopeforcreation.net

Interested in native plants? Looking to deepen your spiritual connection with nature? Want to learn more about how faith communities can act as resilience hubs in the face of extreme weather?

Join our environmental justice partners at Hope for Creation on **Saturday, March 21** from **1-5 PM** at **Portage United Church of Christ** on Milham Ave, for an afternoon of reflection, thoughtful workshops, discussion, and networking with like-minded people of faith.

All are welcome - please spread the word!

To learn more and to RSVP, visit www.hopeforcreation.net/events/faith-climate-action

Groove for Good

Kalamazoo Climate Crisis Coalition and Sounds of the Zoo are partnering to host a high-energy, community-centered music fundraiser featuring multiple local performers. It's happening **Saturday, March 21, at 5 PM**, at **Old Dog Tavern**, 402 E. Michigan Ave. in downtown Kalamazoo. Come and learn about and share feedback on the Kalamazoo County Climate Action & Climate Justice Plan; connect with neighbors, local artists, and climate advocates; celebrate local live music and learn more about Sounds of the Zoo; and support meaningful, local climate and arts work!

This will be a fun, welcoming, and accessible evening—bringing together music, conversation, and community. 100% of donations to KCCC support programs like Climate Ready Homes and the Ardea Youth Climate Coalition. 100% of donations to Sounds of the Zoo go directly to artist pay and production costs.

BENEFITING KCCC'S CLIMATE READY HOMES

YOU ARE INVITED

MARCH 21, 2026

KALAMAZOO CLIMATE CRISIS COALITION AND SOUNDS OF THE ZOO ARE PARTNERING TO HOST A HIGH ENERGY COMMUNITY-CENTERED FUNDRAISER.



DJ TRIBE WALKER



SAMUEL NALANGIRA AND THE CREW



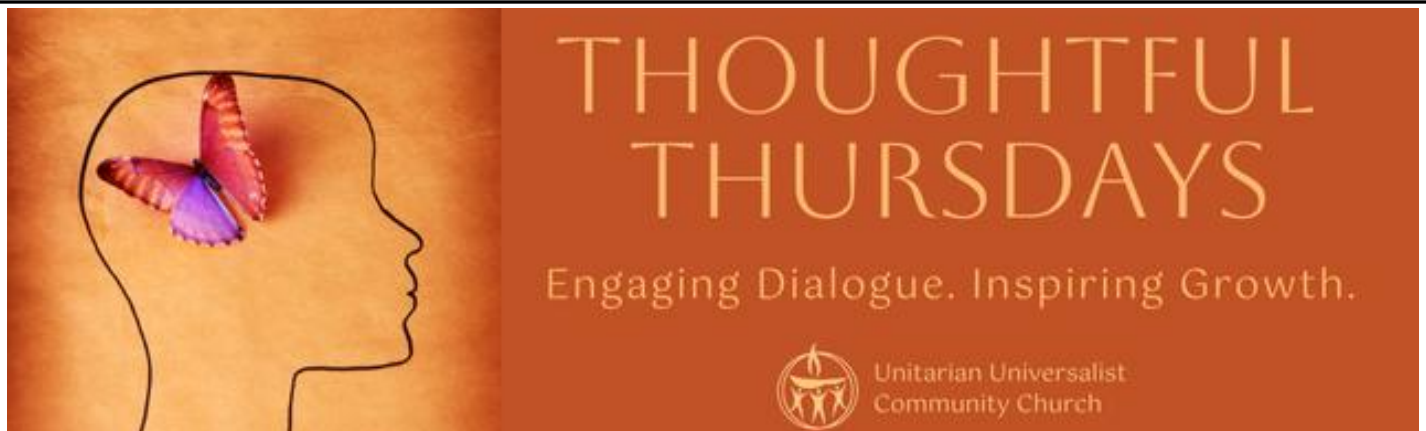
NATHAN MOORE AFFAIR

Kalamazoo
Climate
Crisis
Coalition

SOUNDS
OF THE ZOO

OLD
DOG
TAVERN

THOUGHTFUL THURSDAY



Thoughtful Thursdays, our monthly online series, helps us explore how we can live with deeper compassion, clarity, and connection with ourselves, with others, and with the Earth. Through storytelling, teaching, spiritual reflection, and shared dialogue, we are striving to create a space that will nurture both our personal and collective transformation. Please plan to join us **on Zoom at 7 PM** for these unique opportunities to learn and grow.



March 26: Rapid Response and Mutual Aid

About a year ago, **Allen Webb**'s concern about the immigrant, migrant, and refugee community in Kalamazoo County led him to start the Kalamazoo Immigrant Support Coalition. (Their next meeting is March 6 at 7 PM at Peoples Church, if you want to check it out.) The group has grown from a handful of folks meeting once a month to a network of people all over the county ready to take action. He will join us to share some of the things the group is working on.

When he is not advocating for the immigrant community, Dr. Webb is an adjunct professor at WMU, where he specializes in African and Postcolonial Literature, Cultural Studies Literature, nature, and climate change. To register for this event visit: tinyurl.com/uucckisc



April 9: The Power of Permaculture

Tabitha Farm, an urban farm in Kalamazoo, was founded in 2009 by **Katie Pearson** and her family as a space in the city where plants, animals and people thrive and coexist in a beautiful ecosystem. Katie will join us to talk about her journey and the power of good land stewardship to create a more resilient local community. To register for this event, visit:

tinyurl.com/uuccpermaculture

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.



SMALL GROUP MINISTRY



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

We are always looking for new ways to create connections at UCC and provide comfortable and safe environments where people can come together to explore faith and life or find support. If you have an idea for a small group and would like to participate in forming it, talk to Miriam or bring your ideas to the next Program Council meeting on March 8.

We are always looking for new ways to create connections at UCC and provide comfortable and safe environments where people can come together to explore faith and life or find support. If you have an idea for a small group and would like to participate in forming it, talk to Miriam or bring your ideas to the next Program Council meeting on March 8.



Sustainability Group

Our **Sustainability Group** meets once a month to reflect on their personal sustainability journeys, to share their successes and failures, and to explore ideas for promoting sustainable living at UCC and in the wider community.

The group's next regular meeting will be on **Monday, March 16 at 7 PM** via Zoom. They plan to discuss adaptability and brainstorm ways to build community resilience as we, and our neighbors, begin to experience increased upheaval as a result of climate change.

Click [HERE](#) to join the Zoom meeting or contact Miriam for login information. (uucommunity@gmail.com)



Qigong at UCC

The UCC Qigong Group meets every Tuesday and Saturday for a 30-minute set of gentle exercises that help improve strength, balance, and flexibility, while reducing stress and increasing energy.

Newcomers are always welcome to join this supportive group! They spend time socializing before class to build community, but the exercises are done with the camera off for privacy and comfort.

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](#).



Mindful Living Group

Experienced Mindfulness practitioner, **Eric Nelson**, hosts our **Mindful Living Group** on the **1st Monday of each month** from

7-8 PM on Zoom.

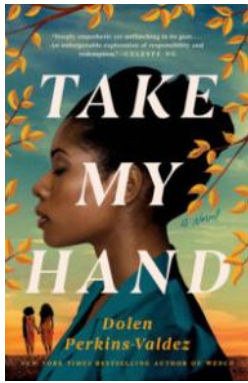
With no long-term commitment, participants can choose to attend sessions month-by-month, integrating mindfulness into daily life at a comfortable pace. This group is structured to help you develop emotional resilience, cultivate self-compassion, and foster deep, meaningful relationships. The group will explore guided mindfulness practices, reflections inspired by *Comfortable with Uncertainty* by Pema Chödrön, and open, heartfelt conversation that supports calm, compassion, and clarity in everyday life.

Whether this is your first time or you're returning, you are warmly welcome.

The next session is **March 2 at 7 PM**.

Register: tinyurl.com/UCCMindfulLiving

CONNECTION



Women's Book Group

Friday, March 13
1:00 PM via Zoom

Kalamazoo Reading
Together Selection:

Take My Hand
by Dolen Perkins-Valdez

From This is a Bookstore: Montgomery, Alabama, 1973. Fresh out of nursing school, Civil Townsend intends to make a difference, especially in her African American community. At the Montgomery Family Planning Clinic, she hopes to help women shape their destinies, to make their own choices for their lives and bodies. But when her first week on the job takes her along a dusty country road to a worn-down one-room cabin, Civil is shocked to learn that her new patients, Erica and India, are children—just eleven and thirteen years old. Neither of the Williams sisters has even kissed a boy, but they are poor and Black, and for those handling the family's welfare benefits, that's reason enough to have the girls on birth control. As Civil grapples with her role, she takes India, Erica, and their family into her heart. Until one day she arrives at their door to learn the unthinkable has happened, and nothing will ever be the same for any of them. Decades later, with her daughter grown and a long career in her wake, Dr. Civil Townsend is ready to retire, to find her peace, and to leave the past behind. But there are people and stories that refuse to be forgotten. That must not be forgotten. Because history repeats what we don't remember.

In the spirit of [Reading Together](#), this session of the Women's Book Group is open to all UUCC members, friends, and guests (regardless of gender identity and expression.) Click [HERE](#) to join the Book Group Zoom.

Quilting for Community

Spring is around the corner and that means the **UUCC Quilting Group** will begin meeting again!



They will hold an organizational meeting at **10:30 AM on March 18** at UUCC to regroup, reorganize, and brainstorm their next projects. Following the meeting, they plan to go out to lunch. Newcomers of all sewing and crafting abilities are welcome to join them.

Beginning in April, the group will meet on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month at UUCC at 10:30 AM.

3rd Saturday Breakfast Group

The UUCC Breakfast Group will meet for breakfast on **Saturday, March 21 at 9:00 AM** at Berries Famous Pancake House on Westnedge.



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 phone number is (269)599-1242.

Game Gathering

We would love to see YOU on Saturday, **March 7 from 1-4 PM** for our **1st Saturday Game Gathering!**

You are welcome to bring your favorite game, a snack to share, and a beverage of your choice. Tea, coffee, and cocoa will be provided. You can bring a friend too!

People of all game-playing abilities are welcome. We hope you can join us for some fellowship and fun!



RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION



R.E.flections from [Miriam Epskamp](#), Director of Religious Education
 I was recently talking to some young adults about financially supporting progressive faith organizations, like UUCU. Their response was, “Why? How do I benefit? What do I get for my money?”

I totally get where they are coming from. Times are tough for our young folks. They have less wealth, more debt, and are facing more economic uncertainty than previous generations. They need to be very careful about where they spend their dollars. But I also think they may be thinking about church in the wrong way. “What do I get for my money?” is a question rooted in a capitalist framework where everything is transactional.

Of course, transactional relationships aren’t necessarily a bad thing; it’s just that the church’s role is to serve as an alternative. A faith community is focused on the bigger picture—the health and well-being of the collective. A church relies on people being willing to embrace the idea of mutuality, that our individual well-being is inexorably entwined with that of our neighbor. And, as Jesus taught, *everyone* is our neighbor.

I asked the young folks (who, by the way, are white and male, and rarely have to think about how their privilege shields them from a great deal of insult and harm) to consider what would happen if there were no voices in America advocating for a progressive faith worldview, and all that was left was the fundamentalist, evangelical, authoritarian view of things. Is that a world they want to live in? They sighed and rolled their eyes, as they often do when their mother starts preaching, but at least I tried. Happy Stewardship Month!



PS. The kids had fun in February learning about Taoism and Lunar New Year. In March, we will travel to Saudia Arabia (in our imaginations) to learn about learn Islam and Ramadan.

DATE	VOLUNTEERS
March 1	Eric and Regena Nelson
March 8	Pat Timm
March 15	Alana Hilton
March 22	Julie Kelemen
March 29	Isaac Epskamp-Hunt



FAITH IN ACTION



Thank you to everyone who supported the **MKB-NAACP Community Baby Shower Drive!** We strengthen our connection with our justice partners at the NAACP, gave our support to efforts to combat black infant mortality in Kalamazoo County, and had fun while we were doing it!

Thank you to everyone who added a link to our **Chain of Resistance** in February! We shared the many ways we are resisting the current state of affairs, including contacting elected officials, attending demonstrations and organizing meetings, talking with family and friends, praying for people’s safety, closing Citibank accounts, canceling Amazon memberships, buying local, eating less meat, and singing resistance songs. Watching this chain grow is a reminder that even in the darkest of times there are actions we can take that make a difference and together we are strong. We sent a picture of our efforts to UUs in Minnesota to remind them that they are not alone.



**BELOVED
COMMUNITY
MEET & GREET FOR
CITY MANAGER
MALCOLM
HANKINS**

Our justice partners [at Interfaith Strategies for Advocacy and Action in the Community \(ISAAC\)](#) extend an invitation for food, fellowship, and the opportunity to meet the new Kalamazoo City Manager, **Malcolm Hankins**, and his family on Tuesday, **March 10**, from **4:30–6:30 PM** at **St. Luke’s Episcopal Church** on Lovell Street in Kalamazoo. All are welcome!



This time frame is open, so please feel free to come and go as you are able. A light supper and dessert will be provided by Chef Jai from Black Truffles Catering.

QUILT OF THE MONTH

Welcome to the UCC Quilt-of-the-Month Sale

Recently, UCC was gifted a treasure trove of vintage quilts from the estate of **Frances Keenan**. Each one was pieced with love and care, and many of them are hand-quilted. After brainstorming what to do with them, we have decided to try to sell the quilts, with the proceeds going to support church programming.

We will start by displaying one quilt a month at UCC. Members, visitors, and friends may purchase the quilt for its asking price at anytime during the month. If no one at UCC is interested, we will list the quilt online on various sites and try our luck there.

Our Quilt-of-the-Month offerings will continue until we run out of quilts. Any quilts unsold by July 2027 will be donated to the Northern Michigan Relief Sale, a quilt auction to benefit the Mennonite Central Committee and its mission to assist people around the world struggling with natural disasters, famine, war, disease, and poverty.

March Quilt-of-the-Month: A Pastel Patchwork — 41 x 42 in.



This sweet and timeless vintage crib quilt, circa 1990, featured soft pastel patchwork blocks framed with a charming pink border. This classic baby quilt showcases cheerful squares in red, yellow, blue, green, and blush, perfect for a nursery with cottage, vintage, or storybook charm. In excellent vintage condition, this crib-sized quilt is ideal for nursery décor, a baby shower gift, stroller cover, tum-my time blanket, or keepsake heirloom piece.

The asking price for this lovely little quilt is only \$50. It is being sold on a first-come, first-served basis, so don't wait too long to claim it! Contact the office if you want to make it yours. Payment can be made by cash, check, or with a credit card on our website or the Vanco app.

OPPORTUNITIES

RESISTING HARM, BUILDING THE FUTURE: *Beyond Borders & Binaries*

PRESENTERS INCLUDE



Sandra Manuel, Ph.D.
Anthropologist -
Sexuality & Gender
Studies



Michelle Renee
Holistic Intimacy Coach



Os Keyes, Ph.D.
Postdoctoral Fellow



Frances Vicoso
Founder of
Co-Creating Culture



Allison B. Wolf, Ph.D.
Director of Gender Studies

Join us for our second International Women's Day conference, *Resisting Harm, Building Future*. This conference will be a space for

- intersectional learning
- community building
- sharing strategies to create the equitable world we deserve

Together, we'll organize *beyond borders & binaries!*

Friday, March 6 - Sunday, March 8
Doors open at 7:30 AM for breakfast
Programming begins at 8:30 AM
No cost to attend | Please RSVP

Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership
205 Monroe Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49006



RSVP here!

Beyond Borders & Binaries

Anne Marie Bulter, a faculty member at Kalamazoo College who grew up in a UU church, reached out to invite UUCC's staff, volunteers, and congregation to the K-College 2026 International Women's Day Symposium, *Resisting Harm, Building the Future* at the Arcus Center. This year's event is **Friday, March 6 – Sunday, March 8**. The theme is “Beyond Borders and Binaries.”

They have a very exciting program planned and you can join for a session, a day, or the whole weekend!

At this important event, activists, scholars, and educators will share tools to aid participants in building a more just and equitable future that embraces intersectionality, inclusivity, and thinking beyond geographical and other divisions. Many sessions will be workshop-oriented, with ample time for breakout groups and discussion.

The full itinerary can be found [here](#). There is no cost to attend, and coffee, breakfast, lunch, snacks, and appetizers are included! You can RSVP here: <https://forms.gle/WHf9oY5Jp6CJjFwd7>

♠♦ UUCC Euchre Classic ♣♥

Shuffle up and show up for an afternoon of cards, camaraderie, and a little friendly competition! The **UUCC Euchre Classic** is all about fun and fellowship, whether you're a seasoned player or just figuring out which one is the Right Bower.

- **Saturday, March 28**
- **4-6 PM**
- No entry fee.
- No partner needed.
- Bring your own beverage.
- Bring an appetizer to share.

We'll mix up partners throughout the afternoon, so it's a great way to meet and mingle and enjoy some lighthearted competition.

White elephant prizes will be awarded to our top players, because bragging rights are even better with something delightfully quirky to take home!

Please RSVP on the sign up sheet at the back of the sanctuary by March 26 and let the Euchre games begin!



OPPORTUNITIES

Interfaith Iftar Dinner

MARCH 14TH, AT 6:30PM

*Portage Zhang Senior Center 203 E
Center Ave, Portage, MI*

RSVP is required. Please click on the
link or scan the QR code to register.

[RSVP](#)

The **Intercultural Association** was founded in Michigan in 2018 with the purpose of advancing social cohesion by connecting communities, empowering people to engage, and contributing to the development of ideas on dialogue, peace, and community building. It does this by bringing people together through discussion forums, courses, capacity-building meetings, publications, luncheons, community engagement, and outreach programs. UUCC has been invited to participate in one of the association’s events, an **Iftar Dinner**, a fast-breaking meal Muslims partake in during Ramadan, on **March 14 at 6:30 PM** at the **Zhang Portage Senior Center**. There is room for 10-15 people from the congregation to join this dinner. **Please RSVP to Miriam (uucommunity@gmail.com) by Friday, March 6, if you would like to attend.**

Trans Day of Visibility

OutFront Kalamazoo’s Faith Alliance and Transcend invite you to an interfaith blessing and service in honor of **Trans Day of Visibility**.

Join a celebration filled with music, reflections, and blessings in honor of trans lives, trans joy, and trans visibility in spiritual spaces.

This program will take place at **People’s Church** (1758 10th Street North) on **March 7 from 2 - 3:30 PM**.

In her address to the UUA in June 2025, trans activist Imara Jones urged Unitarian Universalists to **live our values by showing up for trans folks**. This event is a great opportunity to do just that. Last year, two UUCC folks attended this event. Can we double our participation this year?

Transcend & Faith Alliance invite you to

Be Blessed

An interfaith blessing & service for
Trans Day of Visibility

Saturday, March 7 • 2:00 - 3:30 p.m.

People’s Church
1758 10th St N • Kalamazoo, MI 49009



WOMEN'S MUSIC NIGHT

Women's Music Night
Friday, March 27, 2026
Doors open at 6:15 PM
Music starts at 7:00 PM

**Location: Unitarian Universalist
 Community Church 10441 Shaver Road,
 Portage, Michigan**



Organized by: Sapphoasis
 We will be taking donations to help achieve our 501(c) status as a nonprofit organization.



Megan Dooley

Born and raised in Kalamazoo, and best served with a glass of whiskey, Megan Dooley has been performing in and out of West Michigan and the U.S. for almost 23 years. Her music is an intelligent blend that bridges the gaps of soul, blues, folk and Americana. Drenched in modern-day grit and served with a generous helping of attitude, Dooley's strong vocal melodies and inimitable professional whistling, described as "pure as birdsong, and expressed with great musical aplomb," have helped her define her musical prowess. Dooley is also a multi-instrumentalist, writer, event and festival coordinator, stage manager, open mic host, activist and chef, whose singular songwriting skills have captured audiences near and far. Her most recent album, "Made In Kalamazoo", sold 4,500 copies regionally after its release and was the #1-selling album (local and national) for two years straight at Kalamazoo's Greenlight Music and Video (available for download on all platforms).



Ray Brown

A Kalamazoo, Michigan-based freelance musician and certified personal coach with a background in musical theater from Baldwin Wallace University. They perform various genres, including pop, rock and musical theater, appearing at venues like Dormouse Theatre in Kalamazoo.

ALL are welcome, 21 and older
Bring your own beverage
(Alcohol is acceptable)
Tickets \$25.00
Venmo: Lisa Morris
517-331-5562
Zelle: Lisa Morris
517-331-5562



Dana Scott

I am a singer and guitar player with an eclectic and broad taste in music. I play and sing what I like, and it seems to come through with audiences of all types. I am also a songwriter in the style of the music I love to listen to and cover. I was previously with blues/rock band Big Trouble

Ellis & M.E

Catherine Ellis and Alma Muxlow, whose creative groove comes from tight vocals and harmonies, innovative songwriting and covers that speak to our lives and times. Catherine Ellis is well known as a singer-songwriter and versatile master of folk, swing, bluegrass and blues. Her previous recording credits include Counterpoint (Looking to a Future), solo (Time Again), and Carmea (Raining in Yosemite). Catherine is a powerful lead and harmony singer and plays a mean rhythm guitar. Alma Muxlow discovered entertaining at nine with her ventriloquist doll, Dany. After Danny's retirement, she took up singing, songwriting, mandolin, mandola and percussion. She recorded background vocals for Catherine's solo project and co-produced an original project with Carmea (Raining in Yosemite).

There most recent recording, with finger-style guitarist Bob Elkins, is entitled Holding Up the Moon. The three perform as a trio under the same name.



Hannah Hadley

Is a limited-license professional counselor (LLPC), musician, educator, writer and nature-based healer. She attended Valparaiso University (2017) for music education, whereafter she directed middle school choir and theater, gaining a deeper love and appreciation for student advocacy and mental health support. Graduating with a Master's in Pastoral Care & Counseling from Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary (2024). Hannah continued her passion of music composition, performance and facilitation while interning as a chaplain and counselor throughout her psychotherapeutic training. Hannah now lives in Michigan with her wife, cat and dog. Stewarding the land through ecologically regenerative practices and with joy as a therapist. The intersection of music, communication, land-and anima- based healing and education is where you can find her, with a cat in her lap!

MARCH 2026

DAY	DATE	EVENT	TIME
Sunday	March 1	<i>Determination</i> with Rev. Gy and UU Exploration for Kids After Service Social Time Greeter Meeting	10:00 AM 11:00 AM 11:30 AM
Monday	March 2	Stewardship Committee Meeting Mindful Living Group	1:00 PM 7:00 PM
Tuesday	March 3	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	March 4	Newcomers Gathering	6:30 PM
Saturday	March 7	Qigong Game Gathering Faith Alliance Transgender Day of Visibility Celebration at Peoples Church	9:00 AM 1:00 PM 2:00 PM
Sunday	March 8	Daylight Savings Begins <i>From Drops to Deluge</i> with Rev Gy and UU Exploration for Kids Souper Sunday Program Council	2:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:00 AM 11:20 AM
Tuesday	March 10	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	March 11	Stewardship Committee Meeting	5:00 PM
Thursday	March 12	Meal Ministry Work Day	12-2 PM
Friday	March 13	Women's Book Group	1:00 PM
Saturday	March 14	Qigong Interfaith Iftar	9:00 AM 6:30 PM
Sunday	March 15	<i>The Spaces Between</i> with Fiona Dougherty and UU Exploration for Kids After Service Social Time Greeter Meeting	10:00 AM 11:00 AM 11:30 AM
Monday	March 16	Sustainability Group	7:00 PM
Tuesday	March 17	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	March 18	Quilting for Community Growth Team Meeting	10:30 AM 3:30 PM
Saturday	March 21	Qigong 3rd Saturday Breakfast Group	9:00 AM 9:00 AM
Sunday	March 22	<i>The Transformative Power of Anti-Racism</i> with Manuel Bernal and Liis Lahti UU Exploration for Kids After Service Social Time	10:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:00 AM
Tuesday	March 24	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	March 25	Board of Trustees Meeting MUUSJN Calling and Connection	6:30 PM 7:00 PM
Thursday	March 26	Thoughtful Thursday with Allen Webb	7:00 PM
Friday	March 27	Sapphoasis Music Night	5-9 PM
Saturday	March 28	Qigong UUCS Euchre Classic	9:00 AM 4:00 PM
Sunday	March 29	<i>Strong and Determined</i> with Rev. Gy UU Exploration for Kids After-Service Social Time Greeters Meeting	10:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:00 AM

**UU Community Church
is served by:**

Rev. Gy Ludvig-McCartney M.Div., M.A.
Consulting Minister
By Appointment Only
gyludvig@gmail.com
Cell: 269-352-2412

Miriam Epskamp
Office Administrator and
Director of Religious Education
uucommunity@gmail.com
Church office: 269-324-7262
Cell phone: 269-993-8758

Luke Kritzman
Music Director
luke.j.kritzman@wmich.edu
Cell: (734) 545-3197

2025-2026 Board of Trustees
Dave Uttermohlen
Joel Folkert
Kathryn Ragains-Wilson
Pat Fuehr
Dawn Renner

**The next Newsletter Deadline is
Wednesday, March 25 at NOON**

Please send submissions to:

uuccnewsletter@gmail.com

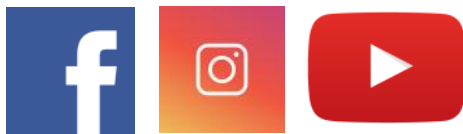
CommUUnity Matters

**Unitarian Universalist Community Church
of Southwest Michigan**

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



CONNECT WITH US!



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