



CommUUunity Matters

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest Michigan

April 2026

APRIL SUNDAY SERVICES

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

April 5: *The Story of Easter* with Rev. Gy and Miriam

We will gather in multigenerational community on Easter Sunday to talk about buds, fungus, grubs, and the life of Jesus of Nazareth, all from a Unitarian Universalist perspective. Easter bonnets and other forms of fancy headwear are encouraged. An Egg Hunt will take place downstairs after the service.

To watch online visit tinyurl.com/uucceaster26

April 12: *Transformers* with Rev. Gy

Contrary to popular belief, Rev. Gy believes that it is possible for a single individual to create seismic change in the landscape of society. Come and be inspired by stories of the transformers among us!

To watch online, visit tinyurl.com/uucctransformers

April 19: *Consider the Birds of the Air* with Gairen Tembreull

Gairen Tembreull, Founder and Executive Director of Albatross Aviary in Grand Rapids, joins us to talk about his journey from working as a university professor to devoting his life to the ongoing crisis of unwanted and mistreated birds.

To watch online, visit tinyurl.com/uuccforthebirds

April 27: *Embodied Healing* with Bailey Mead

Bailey Mead will introduce the principles of [Trauma Center Trauma-Sensitive Yoga](#) (TCTSY), a body-based approach to healing trauma that centers personal agency, choice, and compassionate awareness. Bailey will share an accessible overview of these principles and explore how they can deepen our relationships, justice work, and practices. Participants will also be guided through a gentle, choice-based embodied practice, with invitations to notice sensations, make choices, and engage at their own pace.

To watch online, visit tinyurl.com/uucchealingtrauma



Spiritual Theme for April TRANSFORMING

Streams of Life, our spiritual theme for the 2025/2026 church year, invites us to explore what it means to be like water—together. Water shapes our world through movement and persistence. Waves, in particular, are powerful agents of change, carrying energy that reshapes shorelines and transforms entire landscapes. The greater the energy, the more profound the transformation.

In April, we turn our attention to transformation and change in our lives and in the world. Transformation suggests something deeper than ordinary growth. It is not just a change on the surface, but a lasting, meaningful sea change, a reformation of who we are and how we live.

This kind of transformation is not easy. The most life-giving changes, those of the heart, mind, and character, often require persistence, patience, intention, struggle, and sacrifice. But, that is ok. We can do hard things, especially if it helps to heal this hurting world.

Questions to ponder this month:

What in your life is in need of transformation?

What steps are you willing to take to bring the change you want to see?

How are current social or global transformations impacting you or those around you?

GUESTS IN THE PULPIT

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



Gairen Tembreull is a polymath whose career has spanned academia, technical trades, and the arts. Before dedicating his life to avian welfare, Gairen served as a university professor, a professional illustrator and animator, and an automotive mechanic. This unique intersection of analytical teaching, creative storytelling, and hands-on problem-solving forms the backbone of his leadership at Albatross Aviary in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The catalyst for Gairen's transition into sanctuary work was a life-altering motorcycle accident in 2014. His personal journey through recovery and rehabilitation sparked a profound empathy for the displaced and the traumatized. This experience led him to establish a non-profit sanctuary specifically for parrots—intelligent, long-lived beings that require specialized, stable environments to thrive. Today, Gairen integrates his background in ethology and philosophy to redefine sanctuary management. Moving away from traditional "kennel" models, he implements trauma-informed rehabilitation protocols, such as the "Daycare Method" and the "Five Domains Model" of animal welfare. His work is a synthesis of rigorous observation and ethical stewardship, aimed at providing a permanent, high-quality home for birds while educating the community on the complexities of avian care.



Bailey Mead (she/her) is a trauma-informed facilitator, writer, and longtime community practitioner based in Kalamazoo. She is a certified Trauma Center Trauma-Sensitive Yoga facilitator (TCTSY-F) and RYT-500 who offers body-positive, choice-centered practices that support people in reconnecting with their bodies with greater agency, presence, and care. Rooted in neuroscience, attachment theory, and yoga philosophy, this work invites us to gently reconnect with our bodies and cultivate a sense of safety from within. Rather than focusing on fixing or diagnosing, TCTSY offers a way of being in relationship—with ourselves and others—that honors each person's lived experience and inherent wisdom. Her work supports people navigating chronic conditions and stress-related challenges—including trauma, anxiety, sleep and digestive issues, burnout, chronic pain and illness, and recovery from injury, illness, and addiction. She also uses trauma-sensitive approaches to coach neurodivergent individuals and others seeking more sustainable ways of being. Bailey has been practicing yoga since 1997 and brings a lifelong commitment to anti-oppression and collective liberation into her work. She facilitates classes, trainings, and private sessions for trauma survivors and those who support them, both locally and online. Bailey is also a contributing author to the book *Embodied Healing: Survivor and Facilitator Voices from the Practice of Trauma-Sensitive Yoga*. You can reach her at YogaForEmbodiment.com.



FROM THE WIDER UU WORLD



Our guest perspective this month comes from the Rev. Nancy McDonald Ladd, Vice-President for Communication and Development at the UUA. It is an excerpt of her Feb 2026 article in the UU World: [To Overcome 'Crashing Waves of Change](#)

The physicists say that a wave is a dynamic disturbance in a medium. It moves through whatever substance it is composed of. By its nature, a wave propels. It has momentum. Perhaps it *is* momentum. A wave is the opposite of stasis. The dynamism of a wave means that it will try to expel the force of change it carries by any means necessary, either by traveling onward and altering the future, or by violently pushing backward, swamping the space it left behind.

On nearly every level, as Unitarian Universalists, people of faith and communities, we are overcome with dynamically crashing waves of change. The storms come up and wash over us, one after the other, leaving little room for anything more than the duck and cover of self-protective reactivity.

The litany of dynamic disturbances in the medium of our lives is too long to name. Naming them is too paltry a tool to capture what it is to live through them. We know what it feels like to live in a time of consolidating nationalistic authoritarianism, the medium of the body politic itself swept by a weaponizing power that feels beyond our control. The wave crashes and we fear we may crumple beneath it.

We know what it feels like to lead in a time when patterns of religious practice are changing all around us, rendering former models for congregational life increasingly irrelevant or unsustainable while the ocean depths of our yearning remain unchanged. As congregational leaders, we may track the endowment holdings and wonder how many more years we can make it as-is in our programming and our staffing without some significant change. Sometimes the wave crashes and we put all of our competence into pretending it isn't there.

We know how frightening it can be when we watch the institutions we care about—in our world and in our faith—shaking with uncertainty as change crashes over them, moored to ways of doing and being the church that may not serve us well in the future. We even know how much we have to lose when the only institutions and progressive networks that could effectively oppose the mounting tsunami of injustice find themselves scattered by internal fractiousness and court intrigue, their people spending precious capacity on the wrong things.

And here we are, on the shore. Like a mother watching her child swim away with sure strokes into an unknown world, here we are, both astonished and afraid. We know that nothing we can do will get away from the coming change. We are afraid of what it may mean to trust our own buoyancy, face the risk of failure, and make our way out past the breakers to a field of shared practice, a way of being, that will allow us to move with the waves instead of crashing fearfully beneath them. Perhaps we cannot yet imagine what it would be like for us to not just meet the wave of change but be the wave—to become a force moving in the medium of our days so powerfully that we bring transformation in our own wake.

LEADERSHIP

The Board of Trustees will meet on April 1 at 6:30 PM on Zoom. Here are a few of the things on their agenda:



- Further discussion about the **proposed budget** for the 2026/2027 church year.
- Approving the **agenda for the Annual Meeting** on May 31.
- Considering an **agreement with a real estate agent** to find a regular renter for the church building.
- A review of several **Board policies**

Click [HERE](#) to read the minutes from the last Board meeting. 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 April Generosity Sunday recipient is [Hope for Creation](#), a grassroots network of people of faith and conscience working for climate action and a more just, resilient future in South-west Michigan. Through education and support, Hope for Creation helps congregations turn values into action—advancing energy efficiency, renewable energy, and sustainable practices that create a cleaner, healthier, and more just world for all. Executive Director **Molly Mechtenberg** will join us on Sunday, **April 19**, to share more about this inspiring work.

Ways to Give to Generosity Sunday:

- **Check:** Make checks payable to UUCC with “Generosity Sunday” in the memo and place in the offering basket anytime in April, or mail your check to the church.
- **Online:** Give through the church website or the Vanco app on a smartphone or tablet. Select “Generosity Sunday” from the menu.
- **Cash:** All cash and loose change collected on April 19 will go directly to Hope for Creation.

Supporting our Generosity Sunday partners is one way we make our UU values real in the world! If it is yours to do, we invite you to give generously. Imagine the impact if just 10 UUCC members each gave \$100—together, we could help sustain and expand Hope for Creation’s vital Earth-care work in our community. Every gift matters. Please help spread the word—anyone can contribute and be part of this meaningful effort. Let’s come together to make a lasting difference for the future of the planet and the generations to come.

STEWARDSHIP



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 UCC a beacon of love and hope in a hurting world. **If you haven't returned your pledge card yet, please make sure to return it to church soon.**

Join us on **Saturday, April 11**, 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 UCC 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 11, 2026, at UCC

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 some fun entertainment devised by the Stewardship Committee

7:00 PM – Announcement of pledge results

Contact Regena Nelson (nelsonr@wmich.edu) to RSVP. **Please respond by April 5.**

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 12**. 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!**

In February, we welcomed great guest speakers **Conrad Kaufman** and **Jenny Snyder** to our pulpit. We organized a well-attended **Welcoming Congregation** discussion about defending trans lives. We hosted the **NAACP Community Baby Shower Drive** for the sixth year in a row. And the Stewardship Committee- **Regena Nelson, Joe Calme, Ron Crowell, and Marsha Laya**- put on an amazing **chili supper and concert** with **Megan Dooley** that raised nearly **\$800** for church programming. Together, we can do great things!

We learned about many upcoming **OPPORTUNITIES** :

Open Doors Community Meal: UUCC will partner with Open Doors Kalamazoo to serve a community meal on Sunday, April 19. See page 14 for more information.

UUCC Tag Sale: A committee is being formed to explore the possibility of holding a Community Rummage Sale at UUCC, where we would rent booth space to folks wanting to sell their wares. Contact Marsha Laya if you would be interested in joining the committee.

Budget Solutions: We are facing a few challenges in next year's budget. The board would love to hear more about your priorities and creative solutions as they make plans to fund UUCC's future. Talk to a board member today and let them know what you think and plan to come to the next **Budget Conversation** on **Sunday, April 26, at 11:30 AM**.

Our next Program Council Meeting is coming up this **Sunday, April 12, at around 11:20 AM**.

On the AGENDA:

- Approving our ISAAC dues for 2026
- PC Budget for 2026-2027
- Info about the Annual Meeting
- And more!

Please plan to join us and help keep UUCC's programs going strong! If you have any questions about Program Council or items to add to the agenda, contact Joel Folkert.



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 **Miriam** (uucommunity@gmail.com) if you are interested in donating a pot of soup.

Thank you for your support!

CARING COMMUNITY



APRIL CARING COMMUNITY NEWS

“The race doesn’t always belong to the swift nor the battle to the strong. It belongs rather to those who run the race, who stay the course and who fight the good fight. ~Carl Yastrzemski

Joys, Concerns, and Member News:

There was much to celebrate in our community recently! **Sean Hilton** began an exciting new role with Delano Games in Battle Creek, developing educational products. **Luke Kritzman** was re-elected as Student Body President at WMU. **Teri and Dave Uttermohlen** welcomed their grandson **Sam**, born February 26, and traveled to Colorado in March to meet him. **Marcia Adams** marked her 97th birthday on March 25, while **Michael Wilson’s mother, Brenda**, celebrated her 97th on March 17. We were blessed with some wonderful community gatherings, too, from a successful New UU Gathering hosted by **Joe and Nancy Calme**, to a lively auction evening at **Justin and Kaitlin Wojciak’s** home, and a meaningful experience for **Julie Keleman** at an Interfaith Iftar.

Our community has been on the move! Travelers included **Luke Kritzman** who went on a spring-break trip to South Carolina, **Pat and Bob Fuehr** returning from their wintering grounds in Arizona, and **Tami and Kevin Brozovich** headed there for some spring sunshine. **Regena and Eric Nelson** visited Australia, **Julie Kelemen** spent time with family in Iowa, and **Rev. Gy and Patti** went to Los Angeles for medical treatment and a little bit of fun. **Joe Calme** took a birthday trip to Colorado. We wish all our UUCS safe and joyful journeys and a warm welcome home!

We hold all those struggling with health issues in our thoughts and prayers. **Rev. Gy** is recovering from a CSF leak procedure and continues to experience pressure headache, an encouraging but uncomfortable sign of healing. **Ron Crowell** is recovering from a recent Mohs procedure to remove skin cancer cells, and **Stace Danielson** is recuperating at home following a brief hospitalization. We also send healing thoughts to **David Hunt**, who was hospitalized with blood clots and a pulmonary embolism, to **Corey Crowell** as he faces ongoing health challenges, and to **Robin Chico’s mother** after a recent hospitalization. **Juniper and Willow** are both recovering from oral surgeries, and we hold **Robin’s grandmother, Naomi**, in care as she undergoes medical tests and procedures. May all find strength, healing, and comfort.

We lift up ongoing concerns within our community. **Robin Chico** shared the weight of global injustice and personal challenges, reminding us of the importance of naming harm, building safe and supportive community, and working together toward justice and compassion. We heard about a **family experiencing homelessness** through a Faithify campaign organized by friends at Emerson UU Church in Los Angeles. And many **UUCS folks** concerned about the future of our country took to the streets at the No Kings rally on March 28 to protest war, injustice, and inequality.

This month brought many moments of gratitude. Thank you to **Dawn Renner** and **Dick Bott** for revitalizing our lending library, the Meal Ministry team (**Bev Folz, Jameson Whitney, Kylie, Carol Higgins, Ron Crowell, and Miriam**) for stocking our freezer with care and generosity, and

CONNECTION

Dawn Renner, Miriam, and Nicky Leigh showing up for climate justice at the Hope for Creation's "Faith. Climate. Action" workshops. We appreciated **Mary King's** festive St. Patrick's Day decorations and **Kathryn and Michael Wilson's** altar flowers. We also celebrate encouraging news from Kalamazoo County, where infant mortality rates, especially among Black infants, have reached historic lows, thanks in part to community efforts like Cradle Kalamazoo, supported by UUCC through the MKB-NAACP Baby Shower Drive.

We were saddened to hear of the passing of our friend **Jon Vanderberg**, who moved away to Massachusetts several years ago to be closer to his family. And we look ahead with care and remembrance for a Celebration of Life for **Kathy Hays**, who passed away in December. It will be held on June 13 at her Eagle Lake home.

As always, we continue to hold one another in love, celebrate the joys among us, and walk gently with those carrying burdens.

Happy Birthday to YOU!

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

Welcome Visitors:

We were delighted to welcome **Cathe Murphy, Gary Miller, Sandy Derby, Emily, Alex, Tom, Kathleen, Kaitlin Wojciak's mother Sue, Joan Young's daughter Carrie**, and **Mary Roscoe's nephew Quinn** to our services in March. 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 UUCC office.




Join us for Easter Fun!

Come and enjoy **Easter Sunday (April 5)** with your UUCC family. Rev. Gy and Miriam are working together on a **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 an opportunity to parade during the service to show off your finery. And, there will be an **Egg Hunt** downstairs following the service!

Choir! Choir! Choir!

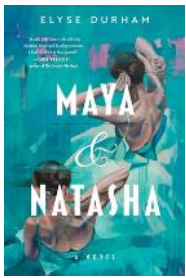
People of all singing abilities and experience are welcome to join the **UUCC Singers**. No auditions or judgment! At UUCC, we believe that everyone can sing! This spring, we hope to sing on **May 10** for Flower Communion. All you need to do to add your voice to our song is **meet Luke at the piano at 9 AM**.

 **We will practice on the following Sundays: April 12, April 26, May 3, and, May 10.**

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

Questions? Contact our Music Director, Luke: luke.j.kritzman@wmich.edu

CONNECTION



Women's Book Group

Friday, April 10
1 PM via Zoom

April Selection:
Maya and Natasha
by Elyse Durham

From This Is a Bookstore:

Maya and Natasha are twin sisters born in the midst of the Siege of Leningrad in 1941 and immediately abandoned by their mother, a prima ballerina at the Kirov Ballet who would rather die than not dance. Taken in by their mother's best friend at the Kirov, the girls are raised to be dancers themselves. The Vaganova Ballet Academy—and the totalitarian Soviet regime—is the only world they know. In 1958, now seniors at the Vaganova at the height of the Cold War, all Maya and Natasha and their classmates want is to dance with the Kirov, and to join the company on its tour to America next year. But a new law from the Kremlin upends Maya and Natasha's lives: due to fears of defection, family members may no longer travel abroad together. The Kirov can only accept one of them. Maya, long accustomed to living in her sister's shadow, accepts her bitter fate, until a new dance partner inspires her to dream bigger and practice harder. For the first time—and at the cruelest possible moment—the sisters are equally matched. And then one sister betrays the other, altering their lives forever and splitting them in two, though neither will stray far from the other's orbit. As one of the twins pursues her ballet career and experiences a world outside Russia for the first time, the other is cast in an epic film adaptation of War and Peace, produced and financed by the Soviet State. As the Cold War heats up, Maya and Natasha must confront their loyalties: to East versus West; to the government that saved them versus their dreams of freedom; and, always, to each other.

Contact Dawn Renner if you are interested in joining the group: grannydawn59@gmail.com
Click [HERE](#) to join the Zoom on April 10.

1st Saturday Game Gathering

Come to the 1st Saturday Game Gathering on **April 4** from **1-4 PM** for an opportunity to play tabletop games or cards with your UCC friends. People of all ages and game-playing abilities are welcome. Childcare is available on request.



Bring your favorite game, a beverage of choice, a snack to share, and join us for a relaxing afternoon of fun, fellowship, and games.

3rd Saturday Breakfast Group



The UCC Breakfast Group will meet for breakfast on **April 18** at **9:00 AM** at the Berries Famous Pancake House on Westnedge Ave. 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

UCC Meal Ministry



Thanks to the hard work of some wonderful volunteers, the freezer at UCC is now stocked with food that can be shared with those who need it. There are three main dishes on offer—hearty chicken soup (gluten-free), vegetarian lasagna (contains dairy and eggs), and vegan lentils and rice. These meals are available to anyone at any time. There is no permission process or sign-out sheet. If you know of someone in the congregation or in your neighborhood who is going through a hard time and could use a meal, go ahead and take one or two to deliver to them. If YOU are going through a rough patch and could use a meal, help yourself!

SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

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

Qigong at UUCC

Every **Tuesday** and **Saturday** at **9:00 AM** via Zoom, you can enjoy a Qigong session with supportive UUCC 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!**



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



Eric Nelson hosts our **Mindful Living Group** on the **1st 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/UCCMindfulLiving

Sustainability Group



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

The next meeting is on April 20 at 7 PM. Click [HERE](#) to join Zoom Meeting. Or visit, tinyurl.com/uccgreenteam

The Sustainability Group would also like to invite everyone to celebrate Earth Month in April with their annual **30-Day Sustainability Challenge**. Go to page 11 to learn more!

Quilting for Community

The UUCC Quilting Group will try to restart sometime this month. Organizers are regrouping by trying to find a day and a time when most sewers can meet to finish projects started this fall and to plan future quilting projects that will benefit service organizations in the community. Once their plans are firmed up, they will be shared in our Weekly Email.

If you are interested in joining the group, contact Marsha Laya and ask to be added to the mailing list. People of all sewing abilities are welcome to join this group dedicated to uplifting families and offering some quilted comfort where it's needed most.



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 Monday between **April 20 and May 18**, 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/uuccsustainabilitychallenge 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.

Spring Mindfulness Retreat

As the season shifts into spring, **Eric Nelson** invites you to a **FREE** half-day Spring Mindfulness Retreat on Saturday, **April 18**, 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.

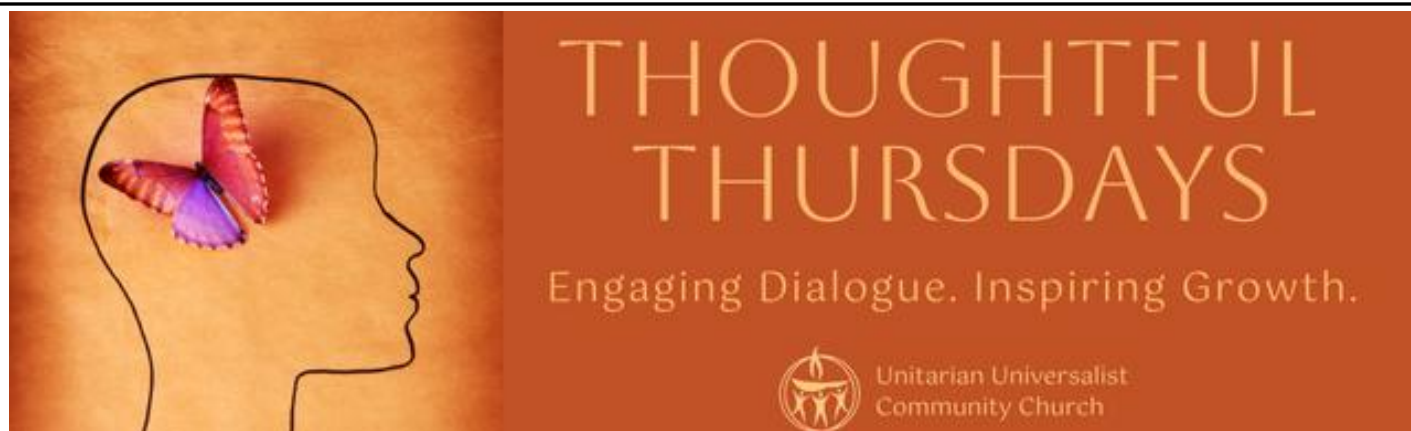
Designed to foster balance and growth, these practices encourage a deeper connection to the energy of spring.

Bring a lunch. Coffee and tea will be provided.

Space is limited—register now to reserve a spot.

Register Here: tinyurl.com/uuccSpringRetreat2026

THOUGHTFUL THURSDAYS



Thoughtful Thursdays at UUCC are enlightening evenings that feature thought leaders sharing insights on a topic of importance to us: spiritual growth, social justice, environmental sustainability, and more. It is your opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions and broaden your perspective about critical issues and ideas. We have an exciting lineup of guests scheduled. 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 9: The Power of Permaculture with Katie Pearson

Join us for an inspiring conversation on April 9 with Katie Pearson of Tabitha Farm, a vibrant urban homestead founded in 2009. Together with her husband, Mamadou, Katie cultivates a thriving food forest, raises animals, and practices permaculture rooted in sustainability, food justice, and community care. Drawing on global farming experience and deep local roots, Katie will share insights into building resilient, land-based living in the city. Tabitha Farm, named in memory of Katie's sister, embodies love, resilience, and connection. Come learn, ask

questions, and be inspired by this powerful story of homegrown transformation.

To register, visit tinyurl.com/uuccpermaculture



May 14: Sacred Duty with Maliha Raza

We are honored to welcome Maliha Raza as our guest speaker for Thoughtful Thursday on May 14. This special evening will explore the powerful connection between faith and social justice through the lived experiences of a dedicated community leader. Maliha serves as the Director of Development and Operations at Kalamazoo Housing Advocates, where she works to support individuals and families experiencing housing insecurity. As a practicing Muslim, her commitment to service is deeply rooted in her faith. During our conversation, she will share how Islamic teachings on compassion, dignity, and justice have shaped her personal and professional path, guiding her work with the unhoused community in Kalamazoo.

To register, visit tinyurl.com/uuccsjislam

CELEBRATE EARTH MONTH

Sow the seeds of solidarity during Earth Month! The Kalamazoo Earth Day Committee and a diverse group of community partners (including our friends at Hope for Creation) are again working to provide several fun, impactful, educational, and free opportunities for everyone of all ages and abilities to help make our neighborhoods and the entire city healthier and more sustainable for all. For the full schedule, details, and to sign up to volunteer or follow along, go to www.kalamazooearthday.com

EARTH MONTH EVENTS

- 4/4 BUILDING BLOCKS CLEANUP
- 4/11 FUN RUN OAKLAND/WINCHELL
- 4/11 EASTSIDE CLEANUP
- 4/18 SEED AND GREET @ ENA
- 4/19 REFOREST VINE
- 4/22 NATURE WALK BIRDS W/ SETH
- 4/25 NORTHSIDE CLEANUP
- 4/25 EDISON CLEANUP
- 4/25 VINE CLEANUP/PARTY



VISIT KALAMAZOOEARTHDAY.COM FOR FULL EVENT DETAILS

Celebrate Earth Day at the KNC

Enjoy FREE admission to Kalamazoo **Nature Center's Visitor Center, trails, and exhibits** all day on **Saturday, April 18**. Take part in KNC's first official BioBlitz, a community science project to identify wildlife. Enjoy activities in the visitor center like crafts and listen to Earth Day-themed talks from local experts. Visit vendors for food, drink, and local businesses and artists. Learn more at: naturecenter.org/programs/earthday/



EPS Foam Recycling and More

Saturday, April 25
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.

Plogging in the 'Zoo

Join friends, family, and neighbors on April 11 at 3:00 PM at Kalamazoo City Hall for a fun, active way to give back: Plogging! The 1.5-mile route combines light jogging or walking with picking up litter along the way; a simple idea with a big impact. The term "plogging" comes from a Swedish phrase meaning "to pick up," and it's all about moving your body while helping clean up your community.

THE CITY OF KALAMAZOO
PLOGGING DOWNTOWN
Picking Up Trash While Jogging

WHEN?	WHERE?
APRIL 11TH	STARTING AT CITY HALL
3:00 PM	1.5 MILE ROUTE

OPPORTUNITIES



CAPITOL DAY APRIL 29 2026

SHOW UP. SPEAK OUT. TAKE POWER.

Michigan State Capitol
Lansing →

9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

MEET WITH LAWMAKERS
TAKE DIRECT ACTION
BUILD PEOPLE POWER

Together we'll fight for a better Michigan

Register: bit.ly/capday2026

Capitol Day is back! [The Michigan UU Social Justice Network](#) is co-sponsoring this event hosted by [Michigan United](#) on **April 29** in **Lansing**.

Capitol Day is an opportunity for working people to stand up and demand better. We're standing up for healthcare, reproductive freedom, and real accountability.

Sign up now for at least two Capitol Day trainings so you're prepared to meet your legislator.

Register for Capitol Day:

<https://buff.ly/SEKFI6Z>

Sign up for Capitol Day Training:

<https://buff.ly/zb5yxxs>

Don't watch history. Make history.
Register to get your seat now!



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, or 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 UUC to host a dinner for their residents on **Sunday, April 19, at 6 PM** at **Trinity Lutheran Church**, located at 504 S Westnedge Street.

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.

If you have any questions about this volunteer opportunity, please contact [Regena Nelson](#).



QUILT-OF-THE-MONTH

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

Recently, UUCC 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 UUCC. Members, visitors, and friends may purchase the quilt for its asking price at anytime during the month. If no one at UUCC 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.

Blue and Peach Nine Patch - 62" x 83"

A beautifully crafted vintage hand-quilted patchwork quilt, dated 1992, featuring a striking combination of soft peach and periwinkle blocks framed by a rich blue floral border. The bold contrast between the delicate prints and geometric design creates a timeless piece that feels both classic and visually fresh.

Expertly hand quilted, this quilt showcases careful stitching and thoughtful composition, offering both durability and heirloom-quality charm. The floral border adds warmth and character, making it an eye-catching statement piece for a bed, sofa, or wall display.

In excellent vintage condition, this quilt is ready to be used, displayed, and cherished for years to come.



The asking price for this one-of-kind quilt is only \$200. 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.



RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION



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

April 10, 2026, marks the 30th anniversary of the National Day of Silence! The day of action was started by students at the University of Virginia as a way to address the bullying and harassment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ+) students on campus. It has grown to a global movement with a mission of raising awareness about the harmful effects of bullying, harassment, and discrimination on LGBTQ+

youth, which, despite 30 years of effort from GLiStEN, the organization that supports Day of Silence activities in middle schools, high schools, and college campuses, are still very much with us. All UCC folks should be aware that in too many cases, the harmful effects of bullying are a matter of life and death. The Trevor Project’s 2024 National Survey found:

- Almost 40% of lesbian, gay, trans, queer, and bisexual youth reported seriously considering attempting suicide last year. For trans and non-binary kids, it is 46%.
- Transgender and non-binary students who report attending a school that is gender-affirming have lower rates of attempting suicide.
- LGBTQ+ youth who say they live in accepting communities attempt suicide at less than half the rate of those who do not.
- Trans and gender-nonbinary youth who reported having their pronouns respected by all or most of the people in their lives attempted suicide at half the rate of those who did not have their pronouns respected.
- Queer youth who experience bullying of any kind are three times as likely to attempt suicide.

I can only imagine that these statistics have gotten worse as the attacks on LGBTQ+ youth have become more fervent following the last presidential election. Whether we are parents, grandparents, family friends, teachers, mentors, or just folks at church, how we interact with and in front of youth matters. They are always watching what we say and do. Our goal should be to lean into our UU values and lead with love and acceptance. Even if you are struggling to understand, you can still support and affirm LGBTQ+ youth in public, and then take your questions to a peer or friend for support in private. OutFront Kalamazoo has resources and support groups to help with this. Rev. Gy and I are pretty good resources, too, and we are always willing to talk things through with you.

I hope you will join me in marking the National Day of Silence with more love, more understanding ,

APRIL RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION SCHEDULE	
DATE	VOLUNTEERS
April 5	Multi-generational Service
April 12	Regena and Eric Nelson
April 19	Alana Hilton
April 26	Julie Kelemen

and more acceptance of the kids who need us the most.
May it be so!
Miriam



UCC kids in their DIY Easter bonnets!

APRIL 2026

DAY	DATE	EVENT	TIME
Wednesday	April 1	Board of Trustees Meeting	6:30 PM
Saturday	April 4	Qigong Game Gathering	9:00 PM 1:00 PM
Sunday	April 5	<i>The Story of Easter</i> with Rev. Gy and Miriam NO RE Exploration for Kids After-Service Social Time Annual Egg Hunt	10:00 AM 11:00 AM 11:00 AM
Monday	April 6	Stewardship Committee Meeting Mindful Living Group	1:00 PM 7:00 PM
Tuesday	April 7	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	April 8	Sunday Services Committee Meeting	5:30 PM
Thursday	April 9	Thoughtful Thursday with Katie Pearson	7:00 PM
Friday	April 10	Women's Book Group	1:00 PM
Saturday	April 11	Qigong Celebration of Generosity	9:00 AM 5:00 PM
Sunday	April 12	Choir Practice <i>Transformers</i> with Rev Gy UU Exploration for Kids Souper Sunday/After-Service Social Time Program Council	9:00 AM 10:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:00 AM 11:20 AM
Tuesday	April 14	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	April 15	Growth Team Meeting	3:30 PM
Saturday	April 18	Qigong 3rd Saturday Breakfast Group Spring Mindfulness Retreat	9:00 AM 9:00 AM 10:00 AM
Sunday	April 19	Choir Practice <i>Consider the Birds of the Air</i> with Gairen Tembreull UU Exploration for Kids After Service Social Time	9:00 AM 10:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:00 AM
Monday	April 20	Sustainability Group	7:00 PM
Tuesday	April 21	Qigong	9:00 AM
Wednesday	April 22	EARTH DAY NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	Everyday 12:00 PM
Saturday	April 25	Qigong	9:00 AM
Sunday	April 26	Choir Practice <i>Embodied Healing</i> with Bailey Mead UU Exploration for Kids After-Service Social Time Budget Conversation	9:00 AM 10:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:00 AM 11;30 AM
Tuesday	April 28	Qigong	9:00 AM
Tuesday	April 29	Capitol Days—Legislative Lobby Event	9 AM—5 PM

**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

Pat Fuehr

Kathryn Ragains-Wilson

Dawn Renner

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

Please send submissions to:

uuccnewsletter@gmail.com

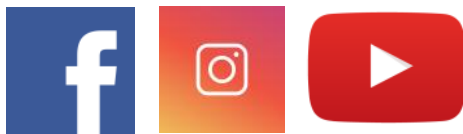
CommUUnity Matters

**Unitarian Universalist Community Church
of Southwest Michigan**

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



CONNECT WITH US!



uucommunity@gmail.com
www.uucommunitychurch.org
www.facebook.com/uuccswmi
www.instagram.com/uuccswmi/

