



The Forum



A Southwest Unitarian Universalist Publication

www.swuu.org

March 1, 2020



Sunday Services

10:30 AM

6320 Royalton Road, North Royalton

March 1

Mexico

The theme for the month of March is Forgiveness. As we witness the loudening clamor of the election season, the issue of immigration presses upon us. How can we forgive the atrocities that our own country is perpetrating at the border? Should we forgive? In 2018, Rev Meg spent some time at the Arizona/Mexico border. Join us as she shares what she experienced there and encourages us as we search for peace together.

-Led by Rev. Megan Mathieson

Worship Associate: Jarret Gold

Focus Collection: Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio

March 8

International Women's Day

Let's celebrate Women's history month by celebrating the feminine in each of us. Today we will raise up our hands and bathe in the joy of all that yang energy brings to our community!

-Led by Rev. Megan Mathieson

Worship Associate: Adrienne Ellis

March 15

We are all Holy

Universalism refers to a belief that we all contain a spark of the divine. It can be hard to recognize the holy in ourselves, but it is there. Join us today as we meditate on what is holy in our hearts.

-Led by Rev. Megan Mathieson

Worship Associate: Leslie Van Kuren

March 22

Making god Together

“God” is one of those itchy words that makes many Unitarian Universalists uncomfortable, conjuring up images of a puppeteer god playing us from the heavens. But the word god can have a lot of different meanings, including meanings that we make ourselves. We'll literally be making god together during this playful service.

-Led by Rev. Denis Paul, East Shore UU Church

Worship Associate: Mark Jackson

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March 29

Brave and Wise Women

Writer Anne Lamott says "Forgiveness is giving up all hope of having had a better past." In this way, we are meant to let go of the past. Women's History month is a perfect time to see what wisdom the wise women of our time, such as Dr. Brene Brown and Marianne Williamson can do for us.

-Led by Rev. Megan Mathieson

Worship Associate: Ken Ellis

Message from your Minister

Forgiveness

"How are you?"

It can be such a heartwarming thing to hear, and when you come to worship at SWUU on Sunday mornings, you are bound to hear that question a lot. We are a warm and loving community, filled with folks who really care and enjoy greeting each other.

But sometimes when you are not feeling your best, the "How are you?"s can become a bit much. When you are surrounded by kind folks who are hoping for the best for you, it can be hard to answer this question again and again, especially if you don't have good news to share. I learned in my training that we live in a society where when a question is posed, even a question asked lovingly and kindly, people often feel a sense of pressure to answer. It can feel overwhelming when the answer is complex and personal.

What is an effusively loving community to do? How can we care for those among us who are struggling, without causing overwhelm? One thing that we can do is to covenant to trust one another to ask for what we need. I have faith in your resilience, and that means that I will wait for you to let me know when you need help.

Should we still ask "How are you?" of those we genuinely care about? Yes. While a rote "how are you" without caring behind it can feel empty and even painful, a loving inquiry is always appropriate. But when we know someone is suffering before we even ask the question, we should slow down and ask ourselves: "What is it that I am asking? What do I really want to say?"

You might find that rather than asking a question, you simply want to tell the person whom you are approaching that you care deeply for them, that you are praying or hoping the best for them, or you may realize that you simply want to offer them a greeting. You could try substituting "It's so good to see you" or compliment their smile. (Commenting on others' physical appearances can be tricky, but every smile is beautiful!)

While I hope you are well, it's okay if you are not. Either way, it's always wonderful to see you.

With so much love,
Rev. Meg
minister@swuu.org

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Focus Collection for March: Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio by Debby Gorencic , Social Justice Committee

The March Focus Collection will support Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio, a vital organization working for healthy bodies and healthy communities by maintaining 19 health center locations in North, East and Central Ohio. The vision of Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio is "to create a world where sexual and reproductive rights are basic human rights, where access to health care does not depend upon who you are, and where every person has the opportunity to choose their own path to a healthy and meaningful life". Their mission is "to protect, promote and provide empowered health care for people throughout Ohio".

Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio is an affiliate of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. Services are designed to help people make lifelong informed choices that focus on responsibility, prevention of unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and reproductive cancers. As a leading source of medically accurate sexuality education and information, they believe that sexuality education should begin at home, continue throughout life and be fact based. The Social Justice Committee appreciates your generosity in helping support and maintain these important services in our community.

Urban Hope News by Jan Wehn, Social Justice Committee

Debby, Don, Scott, Mary and I visited Urban Hope Sunday, February 9. We had a great day. It wasn't the usual madhouse at the beginning, but a steady group of guests arrived from 3 - 4:30. We had two big casseroles which were a hit along with 2 loaves of homemade breads, a tortellini salad, fruits, veggies, crackers and cheese. There were 3 bundt cakes and a tray of homemade heart cookies. All of the food received great reviews. There were also bars and Goldfish packs for takeaways. Thank you all for the great contributions. We all enjoyed the day. Our next visit is Sunday, March 8. Students from Creighton College will be volunteering, and so we won't need extra volunteers, but we will need food! Please sign up on board in the lobby. Thank you!

Is New SWUU for You? by Susan Paxson, Membership Committee

For those of you who have been coming for a while and are wondering about getting more involved, we invite you to consider taking the next step on the path to membership. Twice a year, we offer a two-session class called 'New SWUU' as an opportunity to meet with other new friends and some of our members. We will share what brought us to SWUU, and talk about the highlights of Unitarian Universalist history and our spiritual way of life. It is also a chance for you to ask us any questions you have about our church.

The first session will be held on Wednesday, April 1st, from 7:00 to 8:30 pm and the second on Sunday, April 5th from 12:00 to 1:30 pm. We hope you can come to both sessions. They will be facilitated by Rev. Megan. This is one of the steps toward membership for those considering joining, but it is also just a way of finding out more about us. If you are unable to attend this spring, the series will be offered again in the fall. If you would like to attend, please email me and leave a message. Also, please let me know if you would need child care. We hope to see you there!

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Adopt a Highway by Susan Paxson

SWUU has been participating in the Adopt-a-Highway program since 2009. Each year, we commit to cleaning up trash on the I-71 ramp next to Pearl Road four times, two times in the fall and twice in the spring. We meet at the Islander Apartments parking lot at 9:00 AM and spend an hour or so cleaning up the various areas around the ramp. In return for our efforts, we have a sign with our name on it! You should look for it the next time you are exiting I-71 onto Pearl Road.

This is a great opportunity to live out our 7th principle of taking care of the earth, while also getting some exercise, and getting to know some other members and friends! Garbage bags and safety vests are provided; boots and work gloves are recommended. Does this sound like something you might enjoy? We would love to invite new members and friends to join us on in this endeavor. Our first clean-up of 2020 will be on Saturday, March 29th. The last time I drove by, I noticed a LOT of trash to pick up, so please consider helping out. There will be another cleanup on Saturday, June 6th. If you have never done this before, you would need to come at 8:45 the first time you join us, for a brief safety training. Please contact me if you would like more information or if you plan to attend in March.

April is Pledge Month at SWUU by Steve Doucette, Finance Committee

April is just around the corner! Plants and flowers will start to emerge from the earth; trees will start to show signs of new life; we will start to emerge from our indoor “winter hibernation.” So too, April is the month for our annual pledge drive, when we breath new life into the financial health of our special congregation. Our goal in the finance committee is to partner with the congregation to be good stewards of our financial resources and to ensure the foundations of our future. As we move into April, you’ll be receiving a lot of specific information about the pledge drive. But for now, in preparation for the pledge drive, we ask you to take some time to think about what is important to you about our church and how you can help keep SWUU healthy and welcoming.

Our theme for the pledge drive will be *Love in Action*.

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Would you like to submit something to The Forum?

- ◆ Write as if the reader is new to SWUU
- ◆ Include first and last names, and area codes
- ◆ Include a contact person, phone number, and email if possible
- ◆ Include the city in which the event is located
- ◆ Avoid or explain insider terms and abbreviations
- ◆ Explain Who, What, Where, and When (How and Why are often helpful as well.)
- ◆ Encourage volunteering and participation gently.

Submission guidelines apply to articles and Order of Service announcements. Order of Service announcements may be sent to office@swuu.org by Thursday morning of each week.

Articles are edited minimally, only to ensure that these guidelines are met.

The Forum is published on the 1st day of each month. Submissions should be sent to forum@swuu.org by the dates listed in the calendar of each issue.

The Board of Trustees meets once per month. Check the calendar in each Forum for the specific date. Everyone is welcome to attend. Minutes from the meetings will be available for members upon request to the Board Secretary.

SWUU on the Web

For general information about SWUU, services, sermons, committees and the most up-to-date calendar of events, visit our website at:

www.swuu.org

Receive The Forum Electronically!

If you would like to receive The Forum via email, contact

forum@swuu.org

Join the SWUUList

If you would like to join a newsgroup focused on issues of importance to SWUU, e-mail connect@swuu.org and request to join the SWUUList.

Sermons

If you would like to receive sermons via email or by mail, contact office@swuu.org

Board Minutes

If you would like to receive the Board Minutes via email, contact office@swuu.org, and put "Board Minutes" in the subject line

Editorial Team

Dan Paxson
Susan Paxson

The Forum

“Getting to Know You”

Interview by Susan Paxson

A visitor to our church would never know that **Gayle and Steve Doucette** have only been members for about 2 years. They have fit right in ever since their first visit. They may be the first friendly faces you see when you come to church because they have joined our Greeting Team and they are always willing to fill in when someone has to cancel. In addition to greeting, Gayle serves on our Hospitality Committee and the Caring team. Steve has taken over as chair of the Finance Committee and is also one of the folks who prepare and run the screen during services.

Both Gayle and Steve grew up in Massachusetts. Gayle grew up in Monson, a small rural village of about 2000 people. Steve grew up in Needham, a suburb outside of Boston. Gayle was raised in the Catholic church and attended parochial schools until 8th grade, but she left the church when she graduated from high school. Steve was raised in the Episcopalian church until he was 13, but after deciding he was a “nonbeliever,” he stopped attending church except for weddings and funerals.

After high school, both continued their education in Boston, Gayle in nursing school and Steve in a liberal arts college as an English major. A mutual friend set them up on a blind date. After that, they dated for a time and were married at 21 and 19 years old respectively. You might remember when their 50th anniversary was announced during Joys and Sorrows a couple of years ago! They left New England when their first son was only 10 days old, moving to Chicago for Steve’s first job, teaching at a private school. Steve left teaching for business, and they have moved around the Midwest from Minnesota to Wisconsin, back to Chicago and finally they landed here in Cleveland in 1979. By then Gayle was completing her degrees in Social Work, and starting her social work career.

Gayle and Steve didn’t seek out a church as adults until quite recently. After the 2016 election amidst the negative political climate, Steve started rereading the classic dystopian novels. In one of these, the Unitarian Church was the only institution besides the Quakers who stood up against totalitarianism. Steve then read up on the Unitarian/Universalist Church. Gayle has long considered herself somewhat of a transcendentalist, so UU seemed like a good fit for them. Coming to our church was their first experience with a UU church. They still remember when they walked in the door that first time--the warm greeting, the brief summary of our principles by John Goga in the waiting area, and the sermon on social justice. They knew they had found a church home.

Both Steve and Gayle love the outdoors, theater, music, and reading. Their favorite place to travel is their trailer where they spend their summers at Chautauqua Lake in New York. They have hosted several SWUU folks there as their service auction donation. Family is especially important. They have two sons, Stephen and Trevor, and eight grandchildren living close by. As their grandchildren grow older, Steve and Gayle want to stay involved in their lives. For example, they frequently bring the family together for brunch or dinner on Sunday. These gatherings allow not only for social time but also for meaningful conversations about what is important to the greater good; many times, a discussion will begin with ideas that came up at our Sunday service that week. Steve and Gayle want to pass on their values to the next generation.



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Thanks for a Wonderful Service Auction!!!

by Susan Paxson and Steve Doucette

Thank you to everyone for a totally wonderful Service Auction on Saturday, Feb 15. While the Finance Committee and the Hospitality Committee linked up to sponsor and manage the event, it's all of you who made it a success—those who donated raffle baskets, cakes and desserts, your time to volunteer to help, and especially all of your auction items. We also want to thank all those who attended the event and brought smiles and laughter...Everyone who attended seemed to have a great time.

We haven't yet totaled up how much we raised but watch for an update shortly. Within the next couple of weeks, you will receive a bill via email which tells you what you owe for your dinner, tickets, cash and carry and the rest of your items. Please let Susan Paxson know if there is an error on your bill. The email will provide information on how to pay your bill. You have until the end of the church year (June 30) to pay, but we always appreciate it sooner if possible.

Questions: Contact Susan Paxson, or Steve Doucette.

We all can now look forward to seeing one another and making new friends throughout the year as we attend the various events that were offered. Have fun!!

SWUU Moves Toward a Green Sanctuary

by Adrienne Ellis and Susan Paxson

If you've worried about climate change at all in the past year, month, or day, please read on! A group of seven members met in February to discuss how we could enter the process of becoming a recognized Green Sanctuary. We are one of only two UU churches in Cleveland that have not already received this certification, and with the increasingly urgent need for courageous action to fight climate change, public and private institutions have an inherent responsibility to step up. As a church that vigorously advocates for justice, we believe that we must also be including climate justice in our efforts.

It is our hope that we will have the support of everyone in the congregation, as becoming an accredited green sanctuary will call for an openness to learn, make changes in the way we do things in support of the environment, and above all, passion from our church community. This act will help us live out our 7th principle—to respect the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part—in a very tangible way. Some of you may have been around when SWUU became a certified Welcoming Congregation in 1999 to actively support the LGBTQA+ community. The Green Sanctuary program has a lot of similarities in terms of assessing our impacts, educating our community, and making positive changes.

We plan to meet monthly on the first Thursday of the month and we welcome members and friends to attend the meetings to see what is going on. We will also communicate through forum articles and will be soliciting your help when we have specific things to do. We know we can't do it all! For now, we are just starting to find out what is involved through the UUA materials and will participate in a one-time conference call with the UUA's Green Sanctuary Manager. We are excited to finally take this step and we hope you share in our enthusiasm!

For more information about the program, please check out <https://www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary>

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SWUU Summer Campout 2020
Friday, July 17 through Sunday, July 19
by Ken Ellis

This year's camp will be at Starre Acres in Medina county. This beautiful property is only 20 minutes from church. The camp has enough room for many tents, a fire pit, picnic tables, a fire ring, plenty of fire wood, and many trails with a creek, rock outcroppings, and a pond. There is also a cabin with a fold-out that sleeps two, a loft that will sleep 1, and a Harry Potter closet that will sleep one child. If you are interested in the cabin, whoever requests it first from me will get it. The cabin also has a screened in porch that will work great in the unlikely event of rain or mosquitoes. Water is available. The rest of the facilities are primitive outhouses.

I have been organizing this annual event for over 30 years. It is a great way to really get to know others as we talk and laugh around the camp-fire, hike, cook over the fire and share morning coffee together. The camp is also within a few miles of parks and nature preserves for additional hiking/exploring. It is a wonderful experience for children of all ages. Pets are also permitted, but only outside, not in the cabin or on the porch.

All are required to bring their own gear such as tents, sleeping bags, air mattresses, food and beverages, cooking/eating utensils, lawn chairs, and other camp needs.

So, if you are interested in an outdoor experience with amazing outdoor enthusiasts, and love to sit around a campfire laughing, singing, and talking, walk in nature, let me know. If you have any questions just ask.

I will have a sign up sheet at church soon. Questions? Contact me.



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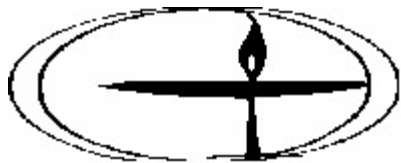
Sharing and Caring

Lois Quarles is home recovering from surgery to repair her left arm after a bad fall. She would appreciate cards and warm thoughts.

Pat Woodside is finished with her radiation treatment and has a month off of treatment to recover. She is so grateful for all of the support she has received from everyone. Please continue to keep her in your thoughts and prayers.

** send your joys and sorrows to forum@swuu.org for inclusion in the next issue*

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We are happy to mail The Forum to anyone who would like to receive it.