



# The Forum



A Southwest Unitarian Universalist Publication

[www.swuu.org](http://www.swuu.org)

December 1, 2020

## Sunday Services

10:30 AM

6320 Royalton Road, North Royalton

Join Us On Zoom!



### **December 6**

*Stillness*

Welcome to December! The theme of this month is Stillness and we will be looking at what it means to be a people of stillness. In the cold and dark part of the year, we warm each other by our communal presence.

-Led by Rev. Megan Mathieson

Worship Associate: Rae Brewer

Focus Collection: UUSC Guest at Your Table

### **December 13**

*Celebrating All Traditions*

Join us as we look at the different traditions of the season, including Hannukah, Yule, and Kwanza.

-Led by Rev. Megan Mathieson

Worship Associate: Adrienne Ellis

### **December 20**

*Christmas Pageant!*

This morning we have a real treat: a "no-rehearsal" Christmas Pageant! All are welcome to enjoy a little holiday fun with Rev. Meg and Director of Religious Education Jenni Papp!

-Led by Jenni Papp, DRE & Rev. Megan Mathieson

Worship Associate: Deb Celinski

### **December 24**

*Christmas Eve*

Welcome to our virtual space which we make holy by our very presence. On Christmas Eve it is more important than ever to take a breath and light a candle as we hear some readings and sing some songs together. Join us at 5:30 pm.

-Led by Rev. Megan Mathieson

### **December 27**

*TBA*

Please see our website later in the month for details on this service.

-Led by Cal Frye

Worship Associate: Mike Gold

# The Forum

## Message from your Minister

### Stillness

As we begin the final month of 2020, let's remember what the Romantic author Emily Brontë said about December:

*"Yet my heart loves December's smile as much as July's golden beam; then let us sit and watch the while the blue ice curdling on the stream."*

December can mean so many things to all of us: holidays such as Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Yule, and Chalica. It can mean snuggling around a warm fire while snow falls outdoors and it can mean feelings of both joy and sadness. Joy springs forward from the sweet memories of the past year as well as from our sure faith that the days will begin lengthening as our planet soon begins its journey back toward our sun. Sadness joins this joy and tempers it as we mull over how very much we have lost this year. There have been severe illnesses, deaths, painful separations and ongoing fears.

In the midst of all of this, I would like to challenge you to reflect on Emily Brontë's phrase "December's smile." What is December's smile for you? How does December specifically smile upon you? Do you see December's smile reflected in the faces of your loved ones, perhaps those faces that you yearn to see in person but whom you must settle for seeing online this year? There is great pain behind December's smile this year.

The theme at SWUU for the month of December is "Stillness." In the quiet of winter, in the midst of our joy and our pain, we will find one another in stillness. We wait, quietly, meditatively, as the virus passes, because our stillness is the antidote to COVID. I'd like to invite you to join us for Sunday services this month, as we experience intentional stillness in one another's virtual presence.

May December smile upon you, and know that your SWUU family is embracing you, even in a time of fear. We love you and care about you. Please reach out to me at [minister@swuu.org](mailto:minister@swuu.org) if you would like to talk further.

With so much love,  
Rev. Meg

### Announcements From Rev. Meg

#### "Building Your Own Theology" Class

**When:** Fridays at 7 pm

**Where:** Our SWUU Zoom room

**What now?:** Put it on your calendar! It's going to be a fun class with plenty of open conversation. We will learn a lot about ourselves and each other! Don't miss it!

#### Rev. Meg is Now a Certified Prepare/Enrich Facilitator!

Prepare/Enrich is a fantastic marital (and pre-marital) counseling assessment tool that has been used by millions of couples over the last 35 years. You don't need to be having problems in your marriage for this tool to benefit your relationship! Contact Rev. Meg at [minister@swuu.org](mailto:minister@swuu.org) if you are interested in learning more about the Prepare/Enrich program.

# The Forum

## **Focus Collection for December: Guest at Your Table**

by Jan Wehn, Social Justice Committee

Every December our Focus Collection is designated to UUSC's Guest at Your Table program. GAYT is the longest established fundraising and educational program for congregations. UUSC works in more than 20 countries with over 60 grassroots partners, and many people around the world benefit from these donations.

The 2020 - 2021 theme is "The Meaning of Home." The meaning of home has intensified during the Pandemic. Please look up the "Guest at Your Table 2020" website to read some personal stories about people from Central America, Alaska, Louisiana, the Pacific, Burma and Bangladesh discussing the different ways their homes are affected.

All donations of \$125 or more are eligible to be matched by the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock in NY. There are three ways to donate:

1. Send a check to SWUU and made out to SWUU and put GAYT December Focus in the Memo. We will send one check to UUSC.
2. If you want the Shelter Rock Match, make your check for at least \$125 out to UUSC with GAYT and Shelter Rock match in the memo Send to:

UUSC, PO Box 808

Newark, NJ 07101-0828.

Please write a note that the contribution is from SWUU with our address.

3. Donate online at [UUSC.org](http://UUSC.org).

**Thank you for your generosity!**

## **Urban Hope News**

by Jan Wehn, Social Justice Committee

Our last delivery to the Urban Hope Storefront was Sunday, November 8 We took 30 bags filled with Sandwiches, Clementines, Hard Boiled Eggs, Chips, Granola Bars, Cheese Sticks, Juice, and Candy. All the bags were distributed by 5 pm. Our next visit will be Sunday, December 13. Thanks to all of you who have contributed cash or actual food items. We can accept anything individually wrapped, and Debby Gorencic, Nancy Peltola, or myself will be happy to pick up at your home or items can be dropped off at our homes (addresses in the directory). Masks, a case of water or juices are also welcome. If you prefer to send a check, we take care of purchasing items that can be used or buy something special, We will continue packing bags and delivering to fill the need of feeding our hungry neighbors. Thank you all so much!

## The Forum

### **December Donations Drive for Urban Hope**

by Debby Gorencic, Social Justice Committee

For the past several years the Social Justice Committee has sponsored a December Donations Drive for Urban Hope. Through the generosity of our congregation we collected enough socks, underwear, T-shirts, hats and gloves to provide our guests with these much needed items throughout the subsequent winter months. In addition to the clothing, we collected razors for men and personal hygiene products for women.

Since all of our church services and gatherings are currently conducted via Zoom, we are not able to sponsor our on-site Donations Drive this year. However, that does not mean the items are any less in demand. Our near west-side neighbors who visit the storefront are food insecure and/or without housing. While we have not been able to serve meals to them since March, Southwest and other local UU congregations have continued to provide sack lunches on Sundays when the storefront is open for shower and bathroom privileges. The storefront also offers bathroom and shower privileges on Fridays, Saturdays and Mondays and is the only organization open for these services on the weekends. Additionally, through a partnership with the Metanoia Project, the storefront is being used as a location for eight individuals from the LGBT community who are living outside to spend the nights during the cold weather. Cots are physically distanced with shower curtains placed between them. A new air filtration system has also been installed.

Since the items historically collected in December will still be needed in the months ahead, the Social Justice Committee will be collecting monetary donations to help purchase the items. I will do all of the shopping and Jan, Nancy and I will deliver the items to the storefront. If you are interested in making a donation, a check made out to me can be mailed to my home address. Thank you so much for your support.

### **Anniversaries**

by Carol Jordan, Membership Committee

Five members of SWUU will celebrate 30 years of membership in December. Signing the membership book on Dec. 16, 1990 were Lydia Avery, Sue Davis, Carol Jagers and Susan and Dan Paxson. We value their many contributions to SWUU over these 30 years.

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## **The Forum**

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### **SWUU Are You?**

by Adam Miller

Staying connected these days can be a challenge. The Committee on Ministry would like to propose a fun activity to give people a chance to interact with each other from home. During the next couple of weeks we encourage members and friends of the church to select a photo of themselves when they were toddlers (somewhere between 1 and 5 years old if possible) and send a digital copy of your selection to Adam Miller. If you do not have a digital copy of the photo you would like to use, Adam can even scan it for you. The deadline for photo submissions has been extended to December 7th.

The pictures will be compiled into a document that will be sent out to anyone interested in participating. The goal is to see how many people you can correctly match with their kiddie photos. You can contact individuals and ask them if your guess is correct or wait until the big reveal when the event is over. Participation is completely voluntary of course.

Even if you are not interested in playing the guessing game, you can enjoy seeing how cute everyone was as kids. If you have any questions or would like more information on the activity, please do not hesitate to contact Adam.

### **Virtual Cookie Baking Party**

by Susan Paxson, Membership

At first, I had figured this was not a possibility but then I found out that lots of people cook “together” virtually on Zoom. Obviously, it won’t be the same, but nothing is these days. I know that I will be baking cookies anyway, so I am proposing a virtual affair on Saturday, December 12th from 1-3 pm. We will meet together for the first 10 or 15 minutes to visit and then we can start the creating. I propose that we can sort of come in and out of visiting with each other during the time when our batter is chilling or cookies baking in the oven. Probably it will be best to mute ourselves when we are not fully engaged with visiting. When you sign up, please let me know what kind of cookies you plan to bake so I can make sure we don’t have 6 people making the same kind. When we see how many families are participating, we will know how many containers to make to give away. The amount you give away is totally up to you. I was hoping to be the Christmas delivery elf but as it turns out, I will be quarantining in California so I will be unable to do this. If anyone is interested, give me a call, text or email. Hope to see some of you there to ring in the season together even we can’t do the cookie swap!

# The Forum



## 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](mailto: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 1<sup>st</sup> day of each month  
Submissions should be sent to [forum@swuu.org](mailto:forum@swuu.org) by the dates listed in the calendar of each issue.

The Board of Trustees meets once per month. Check the calendar on our website 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](http://www.swuu.org)

## Receive The Forum Electronically!

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

[forum@swuu.org](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:office@swuu.org)

## Board Minutes

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

## Editorial Team

Dan Paxson  
Susan Paxson

## The Forum

### **A Thanksgiving Message from Your Board President** by Ellen Hansen-Ellis

Last week (Nov. 16-22) has to be counted as one of the more difficult ones I have lived through. As COVID-19 cases skyrocketed around us, our President was not conceding defeat, a gray, chilly gloom had descended on our area, and my back went out like I have never experienced before. What do you do when you can't sit, can't lie down, and can hardly walk? I am normally a physically active person, hiking and doing pretty vigorous yard and house work despite my "advanced" age of 63. How could I be laid low by raking leaves?! And it just wouldn't get better, for days.

As is often the case, adversity offers opportunities for contemplation and growth. As I progressed from annoyance to anger to despair to acceptance, I spent a lot of time reading and thinking. It seems to boil down to understanding what you can change, and what you have to give up control of. What you should be outraged by, and what you should be grateful for. How much you are loved, and how important that is.

Many Thanksgivings ago, in a hot-kitchen, in a stressed-out moment when too many things were happening at once, I lost my temper with my husband Ken, and shouted some unkind things. My mother, who was visiting, was outraged. "Ellen" she declared indignantly "Ken is a – Saint!". (Compared to my Dad, she was right). Needless to say, this proclamation has never been forgotten in our family, but my point is that Ken once again rose to the challenge and cared for me pretty selflessly while I grumbled and groaned my way through last week. It is good to be loved, and it is very good to never forget that, and to appreciate that gift.

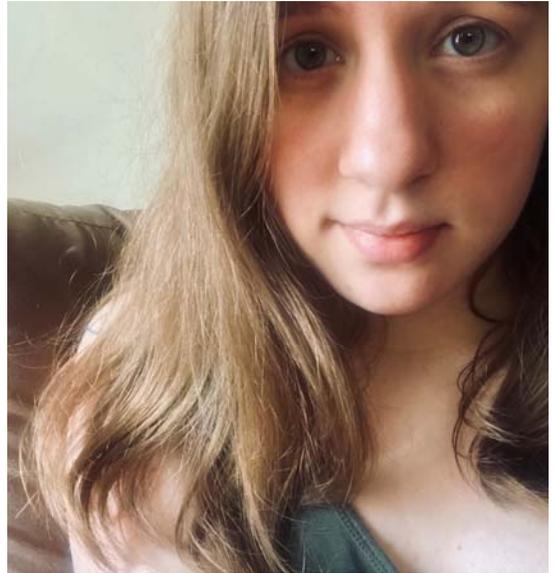
I have been reading some books about racism and white supremacy, and one take-away has been how lucky I have been, how privileged, to live in white, suburban, middle class, 20th/21st century America. Although my soul has been sullied by white supremacy, I have benefited greatly in most other aspects of my life. Not that I have had an easy, comfortable ride all these years, but in comparison to the trials of being Black in America? Paradise. It is good to appreciate our privilege, and to vow to work for justice for everyone.

Today is the first day my back feels normal – an 8 day trip that I'm glad has finally returned me home safe and sound (with the help of a steroid injection and muscle relaxants). I have new exercises to work on, a new resolve to start back on the road to deeper fitness, and a new appreciation for the life I took for granted a week ago. In this awful year, during a time of hardship and pain for us all, I wish all of you a safe return one day to a place of gratitude, love, and acceptance. Happy Thanksgiving!

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## “Getting to Know You” Interview by Susan Paxson

**Rae Brewer** is one of our newest and youngest members. They spent their early years with their mom and Dad, both Missionaries and teachers and one older sister, Judy with whom they are still close. Until age 9 their family lived in Philadelphia, PA, where mom and dad were trying to convert Jewish people to Christianity. Much of this time was spent traveling around doing their missionary work. Then they decided to move to Canada because there were more Jewish folks living there. They spent about two years in Chicago fundraising, and working to get their paperwork in order so they could immigrate to Toronto when Rae was 12 years old. They were homeschooled during elementary school through high school. In addition to home-schooling Rae and Judy, mom was teaching in the school with she founded, and Dad was working as a professor specializing in theology and biblical studies in addition to his missionary work.



Rae led a pretty sheltered existence with a very conservative upbringing here in the US but when they moved to Canada, they found a much more diverse group of people. Here there were people who were of many different ethnicities, having different sexual orientations, considering more liberal values, and practicing various religions. Here is where Rae began to question Christianity which felt like brainwashing and found a group of friends with whom they are still close. After these positive experiences, Rae hoped to attend a state school in the US, but their parents made it clear that Liberty University was what they would pay for.

Liberty University was everything Rae knew it would be. Every class there included biblical references, attendance at church services was required three times a week, and they had many conservative speakers come to the services including Sara Palin and Donald Trump. Conversion therapy classes were encouraged to help GLBT people be straight, and Rae was in and out of these programs while there. Despite all of this, Rae kept a lesbian relationship secret up until two weeks before graduation, when sister Judy let it slip that they were gay. Rae’s parents drove to Lynchburg from Canada to help them “recover” which Rae wanted no part of and to this day has not seen or spoken to them, not even at graduation from Liberty. One positive thing that happened there is that they had a very supportive room mate who made things tolerable.

Losing her support system after graduation led them to the UU church of Lynchburg. Rae was curious to see what it was all about and found a place where you are not judged for your beliefs which have evolved. Rae was also struck by how the members there genuinely wanted to help people. Rae considers themselves to be Agnostic, but also is exploring Buddhism, mindfulness, and Paganism. They meditate but also sometimes read the Bible when anxious. When they moved to the Cleveland area, they attended the Shaker Church but found it too large. Here, they like the smaller size of our SWUU and the fact that people here wanted to meet them, and also be helpful. Rae says that most of the furniture in the apartment came from one of our members who found out they needed it. They also love the fact that they can incorporate different perspectives and feel supported in their search for meaning.

Rae is working at a Real Estate appraisal company. The hours are long but the work is satisfying. Currently, they are exploring other companies that do the same work but are more supportive and flexible with scheduling. Other interests include reading, movies, table top games like Dungeons and Dragons. Some of their favorite movies/books are the Star Wars saga. At SWUU, Rae is a member of the caring team and the young adult group, which has evolved into an antiracist book group. They have also joined the worship team so we will definitely see a new face leading some of our services.

## The Forum

### Sharing and Caring

**Judy and David Newell** just celebrated 60 years of marriage.  
Congratulations!

**Kathy O Smith** was overjoyed to receive a slice of pumpkin pie from  
**Sarajane Willson** the weekend after Thanksgiving. It made her day!

**Sherry and Garry Spencer** share their joy that their son, Adam  
Spencer has been called to the new rector to the Episcopal Church in  
the village of Glencoe, Illinois, which is north of Chicago.

*\* send your joys and sorrows to [forum@swuu.org](mailto:forum@swuu.org) for inclusion in the  
next issue*

**Southwest Unitarian Universalist Church  
6320 Royalton Road  
North Royalton, Ohio 44133**



We are happy to mail The Forum to any-  
one who would like to receive it.