


The Forum



A Southwest Unitarian Universalist Publication

www.swuu.org

June 1, 2021

Sunday Services

10:30 AM

6320 Royalton Road, North Royalton
Join Us On Zoom!



June 6

Bridging

Please join us in our annual service for bridging youth and of appreciation for the folx participating in our Religious Exploration programs. Jaret Gold, a spectacular youth that you may know from his role as a Worship Associate over the last few years, is graduating from North Royalton High School and we will recognize that rite of passage and support him as a congregation.

-Led by Rev. Megan Mathieson and DRE Jenni Papp

Focus Collection: LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland

June 13

Playing Around With Identity: Four Stories

As we celebrate Pride Month, join us as we hear the stories of four people who became more acquainted with identity through play and allowed themselves to feel the freedom to change.

-Led by anastasia birosh, Deb Celinski, Simi Jackson, and Rae Brewer

June 20

Play Perspectives

Four of our worship associates will share their insights and experiences on the subject of "Play." We play for recreation, to relax, to ease us through difficult times, maintain relationships, connect to our inner child, and to reset our minds. Play is an important spiritual aspect of being human.

-Led by Mike Gold, Adrienne Ellis, Ken Ellis, and Dan Paxson

June 27

Play In The Streets

Last summer, we saw huge crowds of mostly young people take to the streets in protest sparked by the death of George Floyd and systemic racism and violence in policing. In 2016 we saw huge numbers of women peacefully take to the streets in protest at the election of the last president. And in January 2021, we saw a protest turn into a violent insurrection at the White House. What pushes us to take to the streets in protest? Doesn't voting empower us enough when it comes to public decision making? Aren't our elected officials supposed to listen to us at town halls, and through letters and petitions? Why do some of us feel a need for the public street theatre of protest? What difference does it really make?

-Led by Rev. Joan VanBecelaere

Worship Associate: Mike Gold

The Forum

Message from your Minister

Play

Dear SWUU family,

For the month of June, we are focusing on the theme of “Play,” and oh, what a fun month we have in store!

We will kick June off with our Director of Religious Exploration Jenni Papp and myself leading a worship service on June 6th where we will celebrate our bridging senior this year, Jaret Gold! You are probably already familiar with Jaret as a longtime active member of SWUU, including as a Worship Associate. As a community, we are always proud of our bridging seniors as they make their way into young adulthood, and we couldn't be more proud of Jaret!

Later, we will hold two lay-led services, one on the theme of Gender Identity and the other on the theme of Play. All are encouraged to enjoy this time of playful worship together!

Towards the end of the month, the UUA will hold our annual General Assembly, which is totally online this year. If you are interested in attending, you can visit <https://www.uua.org/ga> for more information.

Finally, we will close out the month with one of my favorite speakers, Rev. Joan VanBecelaere, the Executive Director of UU Justice Ohio. Rev. Joan has a way of weaving compassion and love into her social justice messages in a way that makes my heart sing. Please join us!

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

The Forum

Focus Collection for June: LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland by Nancy Peltola, Social Justice Committee

The LGBT Community Center is a leading non-profit advocacy and training organization located in the Gordon Square neighborhood. They are committed to enriching the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals in NE Ohio by convening community members, partners, allies, neighbors, and friends in the spirit of advocacy, support, education, and celebration.

The Center has recently reopened, observing social distancing protocols and limited numbers in gatherings. 2020 was a challenging year for everyone, but the Center community met the challenges by delivering meals, tablets, and hotspots to those experiencing isolation, and advocating for those treated unfairly for being their authentic selves.

PRIDE in the CLE 2021 can be viewed at home on June 4 at 7:30pm on WKYC Channel 3. The broadcast will explore the past, present, and future of Pride and the local LGBTQ+ community. On June 5 you are invited to participate in the socially distanced Pride Ride beginning at 10 am at Edgewater Park. Visit lgbtcleveland.org for more information.

Your donation supporting equity and inclusion can be sent directly to SWUU, 6320 Royalton Rd., North Royalton, OH 44133 or donate online at the Vanco GivePlus website (<https://tinyurl.com/swuu-give-plus>) or mobile app. After the end of June, one check will be presented to The Center from our church family to support their essential services. Thank you for your generosity.

Urban Hope News by Jan Wehn, Social Justice Committee

By the time you read this, we will have made our May 30th visit to Urban Hope. Assuming it will go well! Our June visit is scheduled for the 20th. We are in good shape for cash for another couple of months but can start collecting prepackaged items such as granola bars, chips, cookies, puddings, water, small juices, etc. It has not been determined when we will have actual served meals again. We are all staying tuned! Thank you for your support! Any questions contact Jan Wehn, Debby Gorencic or Nancy Peltola.

The Forum

Notes From the Board

by Ellen Hansen-Ellis and Dodi Lettus

The arrival of spring and changes in the pandemic situation seem to have quickened the pace of all of our lives. Suddenly there is a lot happening! Many changes are in the works at SWUU as well, as you will see below. This will be my last month as Board president, although I plan to continue my involvement in a number of the church's more pressing concerns. I welcome Dodi Lettus as the new president, and wish her well as we move on in these challenging times. It has been a privilege to serve this church that I love! My retirement from Baldwin Wallace is also coming up soon – July 16 – and I am excited to begin this new chapter in my life.

ANNUAL MEETING

The SWUU annual meeting will be on Sunday, June 27th on Zoom immediately following the church service (11:15AM-we will hold a shortened worship service). There will be several items requiring a congregational vote, including a bylaws change, so we must have a quorum (25% of membership) in order to have valid results. Please attend if possible. Proxy voting and agenda information will be sent out before June 6.

NEW RE-OPENING TASK FORCE

A Re-Opening Task Force has been formed to develop a process to resume in-person Sunday services. The task force had its first meeting last week. Members are Ryan Bergeron, Gay Cady, Deb Celinski, Ellen Hansen-Ellis, Dan Paxson, Jenni Papp, and Judy White. The group will review available information and recommendations on safe practices from a variety of sources, and then put together a proposal for the board to vote on. Notes from our two congregational feedback sessions will also be reviewed and considered as part of the process.

OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR POSITION

Work is underway on hiring a part-time Office Administrator. Kristen Cimera will continue her work as our Financial Specialist. The OA will perform clerical and administrative duties as well as work with our webpage and social media presence. The goal is for this person to come on board shortly after we return to full in-person use of our building.

MUSIC DIRECTOR LEAVING

It is with sadness that I announce that our music director, Ryan Bergeron, will be moving on to a position at another (much larger) church, effective July 5. Ryan will be greatly missed, and we appreciate all he has contributed to SWUU. We wish him the best! The search for a new music director has already begun; more news to follow as it develops.

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 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 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

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

My Invisible Backpack:

CHOOSING to Deepen My Antiracism Journey

by Adrienne Ellis (she/her), on behalf of the Antiracism Taskforce

I am pleased to share that the Antiracism Taskforce is an official committee and has had two meetings already! You can absolutely still get involved--keep an eye out for correspondence regarding upcoming meetings, and be sure to attend a Friday evening 8th Principle discussion.

Now, moving past the business, I am writing this article because during the pandemic, something in me clicked that I needed to learn and do more. Many of you know that I grew up at SWUU, graduated from Berea High School (perhaps a more diverse public school than some of the other surrounding suburbs of Cleveland), was involved in LGBTQ+ advocacy in undergrad, then taught in inner city San Antonio through the Teach For America program. All this to say, I always thought of myself as an advocate for the marginalized and for social justice. But after the murder of George Floyd, I said to myself, "what do I really know, and what am I doing about it?" I wasn't pleased with my own answer, and realized that my own journey to understand inequality and injustice in this country hadn't been as robust as I'd thought.

The term 'white silence' - the notion that white folks, especially those who feel they are well-meaning, do not show up, speak out, or truly embed themselves in antiracism work - hit me hard when I was reading "Me and White Supremacy" by Layla F. Saad. I realized that in my personal life, sure, I stood up for my BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) friends and colleagues, but that I wasn't standing up to institutional racism, nor did I have the background to truly understand this idea.

So I dove into reading, including Saad's incredible book to understand your own personal relationship with racism in America. Three other books that inspired me were How to be an Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi; Citizen: An American Lyric by Claudia Rankine; and Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson. These books, although all quite different in form, began to help my brain put together the pieces to understand how interconnected our history, sexism, policing, education, and justice are to WHITE SUPREMACY. This is not a fun thing to learn, this doesn't make you feel GOOD as a white person, but this knowledge is both essential and more importantly, NOT something that you can "un-learn."

I realized that discomfort is essential. Racism and inequality still run rampant in the United States (and the world), and to deny that is to deny the honor and humanity of BIPOC. When I choose to deepen my antiracism journey, I begin to shed light on my own privilege, and the ways that I can contribute to the necessary dismantling of white supremacy through my words and actions. So I encourage everyone to read, discuss, call out and call in (speaking privately to someone about something problematic they have done or said), to march, and keep up to date, to question your own privilege.

The status quo has been disproportionately good for white folks for, well, forever. Are you willing to fight the status quo in order to support the human rights and dignity of our fellow citizens? Get uncomfortable. Get proximate. We can't wait any longer.

My personal journey has led me to have irrevocable support for our congregation to adopt the 8th Principle, as it is both a call to personal responsibility and to addressing the institutions which continue to suppress the rights and access for BIPOC. I encourage you to continue your exploration, to be uncomfortable, and to have the conversations that need to happen.

The Forum

Technical Misgivings about being on the ZUUM Team?

by: anastasia birosch on behalf of the ZUUM Worship Team

I love SWUU and this unique community that has become my family of choice over the years. Because of how beloved the SWUU community is, I choose to give back by being on the ZUUM (Zoom Unitarian Universalist Ministry) Worship Team.

Now, I thoroughly understand that some folks find technology and computers mysterious and even intimidating. My goal is to alleviate some of that anxiety and ambivalence, possibly by showing it's not as bad as our minds make situations out to be.

Apart from the worship side of remote or hybrid church (some attending in the sanctuary, and others attending from home), Zoom services require both a Director/Host and a Gaffer. Please understand that the ZUUM Worship Team is currently only at the beginning stages of planning and piloting hybrid services.

The Director/Host admits people from the waiting room, spotlights speakers, and manages the breakout rooms during coffee hour. It is possible to do this from home during a hybrid service.

To be a Director/Host:

- 1) An internet connection with a solid 1-2 MBPS upload speed
- 2) Enough comfort with computers and apps so that they don't intimidate you.

The Gaffer is more involved and requires a few hours on Saturday to assemble pre-recorded material (following the Order of Service) into a PowerPoint presentation. The Gaffer has to be in the sanctuary during a hybrid service.

The following are needed to be a Gaffer:

- 1) An internet connection with a consistent upload speed of at least 3 Megabits per second (Zoom says less, but that hasn't been my experience). I would be most comfortable if it were more like 5+ MBPS.
- 2) An actual computer (no tablets) that's newer (less than five years old) and running a current OS (Operating System).
- 3) A recent (PowerPoint 16.0) version of Microsoft PowerPoint. *Note: This version is in the Microsoft Office 2016 and Microsoft Office 2019 suites, as well as part of the Microsoft Office 365 subscription plans*
- 4) Familiarity with PowerPoint.
- 5) Rudimentary knowledge of filesharing and Cloud storage (i.e., using Google Drive, DropBox) to assemble the presentation.
- 6) Time on Saturday morning. The material for the service is rarely completely ready before then.

If you want to be part of the ZUUM Worship Team, do not hesitate to contact any member of the ZUUM team or Rev. Megan. We provide training, patience, and love to all volunteers.

The Forum

“Getting to Know You”
Interview by Susan Paxson

Michelle and Vladimir (aka Vlad, aka Val, aka Vlado) **Vancisin** and their daughter **Genevieve** (aka Evie) found SWUU through Michelle’s dad, Keith Rasey, who has preached for us at least twice and has joined the UU church since his retirement. Michelle grew up in churches across Ohio and Michigan, and as a teen, travelled to Guatemala to help her mom run an import business.

Vlad grew up behind the Iron Curtain in Slovakia and had no church experience because it was forbidden. He came to the US in 1993, and lived with his sister up until he met Michelle. They were dancers in Lucina, a Slovak dance troupe and knew they wanted to get married after two weeks of dating. They were married at the Methodist Church in Berea in 1995 and had Evie in 2007.

After becoming uncomfortable with changes in the Methodist denomination, they decided to check out SWUU, which they had been driving by for a number of years. They were looking for a church where Evie could thrive as well as a more open minded, progressive congregation. The UU principles match their philosophy and they enjoy the people they’ve met at SWUU. Michelle has helped teach RE and Vlad has helped out with Buildings and Grounds, volunteering his woodworking and painting skills.

Vlad works for Sherwin Williams, and Michelle is an author and teaches digital marketing. Michelle has also been home-schooling Evie for three years, and Vlad is working night and day to DIY renovate their 1860 farmhouse in Richfield. The house has been their big project since 2019 and they hope to finally move in this summer.

The farmhouse was built by the Oviatts, who were chicken farmers and abolitionists. During the remodel, they’ve found some fun things in the walls; opium bottles, a brand-new camper toilet from the 70s in harvest gold (not left behind, actually stashed in a carefully concealed compartment), and a tool painted with Mennonite-like patterns that they haven’t figured out yet.

Michelle likes the peacefulness of the farm and tries to garden. Evie is learning about all of the plants on the property, has her own herb garden, and is studying bones after finding an animal skeleton on the farm. Evie and Michelle also have a big rock collection and several fossils.

The Vancisins enjoy going to the theater, out to restaurants, and taking walks in the parks. In his rare free time, Vlad likes shopping online estate sales. He loves a good find! They also have two dogs who steal socks, eat rocks, and keep them on their toes. Evie plans to return to traditional school for 8th grade. She also plays flute, is interested in theater, and would like to work on the tech crew.

They have traveled to various places, but they often go to northern Michigan in the summer and stay with Michelle’s great aunt. Other than Michigan, their favorite family trip is Ottawa, Canada, which has great restaurants, and a cool bunker from the Cold War. Right now, though, they are most excited about their new home and hope to have lots of people visit, and even have some SWUU outdoor functions there, since they have the space. I know I look forward to being able to see the home they are creating together!



The Forum

Sharing and Caring

Carol Jagers writes: **Jim Jagers** spent 5 days in the hospital then two weeks in a rehab facility after his operation on a malignant kidney tumor. We are extremely grateful that the tumor was completely removed and that he does not need chemotherapy or radiation. He was released from the rehab facility May 25 and will have a month of weekly nursing care, twice weekly physical and occupational therapy, as well as a health aid in our home. His recovery is going quite well.

Keith Mathews reports "I am home. The cast is off, replaced by a removable brace. I have home physical therapy and occupational therapy twice a week each. Next doctor appointment is June 7."

Dan and Susan Paxson are pleased to announce that their son **Derek** and his fiancée, **Leah Seligman** will finally be getting married in a very scaled down version of the wedding on Saturday, June 26th in Ithaca New York.

Candy Poissant announces the birth of her new granddaughter, Elaine May Chesnes, named for Candy's mother. "Nellie" was born on May 20th weighing 10 pounds 1 ounce. This would have been Candy's parents' 75th wedding anniversary. The family is home and doing well!

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

Southwest Unitarian Universalist Church
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North Royalton, Ohio 44133



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