



# The Forum



A Southwest Unitarian Universalist Publication

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

September 1, 2022

## Sunday Services

10:30 AM

6320 Royalton Road, North Royalton  
In-Person and On Zoom!



### September 4

*Who Do We Belong To?*

On this Labor Day weekend, we remember and honor the important role of labor organizers and the ongoing fights for workers' rights. Life-saving labor movements of the past, present, and future, are great reminders that we are human beings rather than commodities that belong to those who employ us. So then, who do we belong to?

-Led by Ali Peters

Worship Associate: Leslie VanKuren

Focus Collection: Minister's Discretionary Fund

### September 11

*One Country, Divisible*

These days, it often feels like our country is more divided than ever. How do we find a sense of belonging in this context without re-inscribing these divisions?

-Led by Ali Peters

Worship Associate: Sarajane Willson

### September 18

*Ingathering Water Celebration*

The first service of each program year, in mid-September, is our "ingathering" service, when we re-gather after the summer may have taken some of us in different directions. We mark this ingathering with our annual water celebration ritual. On this Sunday, you are invited to bring some water from a place that is significant to you (whether that be your kitchen sink or a far off stream). Come as we join our waters together in community.

-Led by by Ali Peters

Worship Associate: Rae Brewer

### September 25

*Belonging: the Foundation for the Spiritual Journey*

The theme of belonging has become popular in our current time for many reasons. The pandemic, increasing loneliness in the sea of a technological world, etc. brings to the forefront the basic human need to belong. Since the beginning of time, belonging has been the foundation for the spiritual journey. In this message, Alan will explore belonging as a process, not an event. He suggests three "steps" in the process of belonging. To practice these steps implicates meaning for the individual and depth for community.

-Led by Dr. Alan Kolp

Worship Associate: Deb Celinski

# The Forum

## Message from your Minister

### Belonging

Dear Ones,

Oh wow! This is my very first message in the Forum newsletter! It certainly feels like a big deal. In fact, each one of my “firsts” at SouthWest UU so far has felt like a big deal. Every first has felt like a sacred threshold to be passing through as we start our journey together – from the first time I stepped foot into our building, to the first sermon I preached on August 14, to the first time one of you invited me into your home to chat over a glass of lemonade.

Throughout each of these firsts, there is one thing that has stood out to me: You all have made me feel like I belong. From the get-go you have sent a clear message of belonging to me, a newcomer in this lovely community. How meaningful that has been! Thank you!

I hope you will join us in worship this month as we explore this theme of “belonging” together. What does it mean to belong and what is at stake? Who or what do we belong to? How can we find authentic belonging in a world that feels increasingly divided? Join us as we wrestle with these questions and many more this month. And as we embark on this journey together, I offer to you, beloveds, this blessing for belonging, from Irish poet, theologian, and philosopher, John O’Donohue:

#### *“For Belonging”*

*May you listen to your longing to be free.*

*May the frames of your belonging be generous enough for your dreams.*

*May you arise each day with a voice of blessing whispering in your heart.*

*May you find a harmony between your soul and your life.*

*May the sanctuary of your soul never become haunted.*

*May you know the eternal longing that lives at the heart of time.*

*May there be kindness in your gaze when you look within.*

*May you never place walls between the light and yourself.*

*May you allow the wild beauty of the invisible world to gather you, mind you, and embrace you in belonging.*

May it be so, dear ones.

With love,

Ali Peters

Minister, SouthWest Unitarian Universalist Church

P.S. I am eager to get to know everyone here at SouthWest UU! I invite you to please reach out to me by email ([minister@swuu.org](mailto:minister@swuu.org)) to set up a time to chat. No reason or conversation topic needed – let’s just connect!

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## **Focus Collection for August and September: Minister's Discretionary Fund** by Nancy Peltola, Social Justice Committee

During these two months, we will collect monetary gifts to benefit the Minister's Discretionary Fund. These current financial times have been challenging for all of us, and more people in our SWUU Family have needed assistance to meet their own basic financial obligations.

While we did just have a Focus Collection in April for this purpose, the fund is nearly depleted. By collecting for the Minister's Discretionary Fund during August and September, we will be able to welcome our new minister, Ali Peters, with funds that she has discretion to give to our SWUU members and friends who need it the most. As many in our church community know, a private appointment may be made with our minister to confidentially discuss a special monetary need.

Donations may be made by check at a church service or by mail to SWUU, 6320 Royalton Rd., North Royalton, OH 44133. Please write Focus Collection on the memo line. Or you may use the Vanco GivePlus website and just check Focus Collection. Thank you for your generosity.

## **Urban Hope Outreach Update** by Debbie Gorencic, Social Justice Committee

The Urban Hope Storefront was closed during the month of August for the annual painting and deep cleaning projects. It will reopen in September. The Steering Committee (which includes Jan Wehn and Debby Gorencic) met in August and made the decision to once again invite guests into the Storefront and to provide them with the option of being seated while enjoying their food and beverages. The UU congregations who provide the food will return to the pre-COVID practice of serving full meals rather than sack lunches and snacks.

At SWUU the Social Justice Committee will once again be requesting donations of food items to help us prepare the meals to be delivered and served at the Storefront on the second Sunday of the month. Our next visit is September 11. There will be a sign up sheet on the table in the lobby and donations can be brought to church on the Sunday mornings of our visits. In addition to signing up for donations we invite you to sign up to join us from 3:00 -5:00pm to help serve the meals, get to know the Urban Hope Community and assist with cleanup. For additional information please feel free to contact Jan Wehn, Debby Gorencic or Nancy Peltola. Our contact information is in the church directory. Your ongoing generosity and support are greatly appreciated.

## **Meet the Minister Gatherings** by Susan Paxson, Membership Committee

Wasn't it exciting to have such a great turnout for church on Ali's first Sunday? People are obviously anxious to get to know our new minister, Ali Peters. There were 70 people in person on August 14th! We are scheduling some informal gatherings that people can attend to get to know her a little more. If you would like to attend one, please check with the host by calling or emailing to make sure there is room. We want them to be small, so all will be able to participate. Thank you to our volunteer hosts for these meetings! Here are the schedules gatherings and hosts:

- Nancy Matsko, Thursday, September 22nd from 2:30-4:30 PM.
- Lydia Avery, Saturday, September 24th from 4-6 PM
- Hallie Davis, Thursday, September 29th from 2-4 PM.
- Lois Veraguth, Tuesday, October 4th from 7-9 PM

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## **Notes From The Board** by Mike Gold, Board President

Minister Ali's first two weeks in the pulpit have been so inspiring and uplifting. The energy inside our beautiful church atop the hill in North Royalton is palpable. If you can, come to church in person and enjoy how great it is to be together and enjoy ministry. We have coffee hour again. There is Religious Exploration for the youth. And if you have health concerns, there are areas in the sanctuary to social distance and you are welcome to come masked or unmasked if fully vaccinated. Of course, the services are still available on Zoom.

The excitement is being reflected in the number of folks signing up to help in church life. If you'd like to volunteer, there are plenty of opportunities. Call our Church Administrator, Carolyn Stevens for more information.

Ali is very outgoing and has joined in on coffee hour each week so she can get to know us. She has posted hours that she can be contacted each week. These can be found in the Sunday Service announcement that Carolyn sends out. Susan Paxson is also organizing some Meet the Minister opportunities, which will be described in a separate article in this Forum.

The Board and Ali held a retreat facilitated by Rev. Renee Ruchotzke, our Congregational Life Staff regional representative, in mid-August. Some of the issues we hope to address include re-energizing and growing membership, appreciating and attending to the volunteers that make SWUU so great, living into the adoption of the 8th principle, building better communication with the congregation and church groups, clarifying roles and responsibilities and building a strong foundation for our new minister.

Mark Sunday, November 6, on your calendar, as we will be celebrating 35 years of SWUU on that date. Carol Jordan and Dodi Lettus are heading up a group of folks planning the event. You will be hearing much more about this as the date grows closer.

As always, if you have any items you'd like the Board to consider, please contact me or Deb Celinski. Our goal is to serve the congregation and make church the best it can be. Just so you know, through the end of the year, our monthly meetings will be on the second to last Friday's of the month. The September meeting is the last Friday of the month.

Last but not least, a shout out to all the volunteers who make our church life so vibrant, from Sarajane, who brings flowers for the sanctuary every Sunday, to the gardeners who keep the landscaping weed-free, to the greeters and hosts for coffee hour, to name just a few. Many thanks to all who contribute their time and talent.

Mike Gold  
[president@swuu.org](mailto:president@swuu.org)

## **Games Group** by Susan Paxson

A new group is starting for anyone who is interested and available during the day. We will get together and play a variety of word/card games or any other games you like. To make it easy to remember the time, it will be the second Tuesday of them month at 2:00 pm for about two hours! We are still working out the details of who is coordinating, so for now, contact Susan Paxson. We will try having this activity at church so there is no limit to the number of people who can attend. Feel free to bring your favorite games and a snack to share if desired. Not available during the day? Let me know and perhaps we can also bring back our intergenerational pizza and games night. The last one was the last SWUU event before we had to move to virtual meetings for Covid. Let me know if you are interested by email or text!

# 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)

## Get Connected!

If you would like to receive The Forum via email, or if you would like to join a newsgroup focused on issues of importance to SWUU, or if you would like to receive our weekly newsblast, e-mail [connect@swuu.org](mailto:connect@swuu.org) and tell us which you want.

## 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

## **SWUU Choir is Back!**

by Ellen Hansen-Ellis, Emerita SWUU music director

As the Chair of the new Music Team, I am happy to report that the SWUU Choir will return to once-a-month rehearsals and performances beginning in September. Our own Janet Williams (a music teacher in the Parma Schools) will be directing the choir.

Choir will rehearse one Thursday per month, generally the third Thursday unless there is a holiday that conflicts. Rehearsals will be from 7:00 – 8:30 PM in the church sanctuary.

The rehearsal/performance schedule for the next 3 months is as follows:

- 9/22 and 9/25
- 10/20 and 10/23
- NO rehearsal in November
- 12/1 and 12/4
- 12/22 and 12/24 (Christmas Eve at 5:30PM)

This will be a time of rebuilding the choir so we can enhance the worship services and deepen our connections. **\*\*THE CHOIR WILL NEED NEW MEMBERS\*\*!** If you sing, and are interested in group music-making, please contact me or Janet to let us know that you want to join (or at least try it out). A larger group makes for a better choral sound – we need you!

Ellen: [ehansenellis@gmail.com](mailto:ehansenellis@gmail.com)

Janet: [jcbwilliams32017@gmail.com](mailto:jcbwilliams32017@gmail.com)

Thank you for contributing to this important ministry at SWUU, and let the singing begin (again)!

## **Evening Book Group**

by Hallie Davis

The beginning of school is a great time to pick up a good book! The SWUU Zoom Evening Book group is one of the many ways to meet others in our SWUU community. We read and discuss the book together. Most books are renewable through your local library or can be purchased new or used.

We choose books that expand our UU community awareness of social issues; reflect our commitment to our UU Principles or provide spiritual and personal enrichments. Please bring 1 or 2 book titles and info to our 1st meeting. As a group we'll rate, rank and vote on the 1st book.

Join in on the SWUU Zoom link on Monday, September 12th from 7-8:30 pm. The link may be found in the email with the Order of Service. At this meeting we will decide how often to meet and when. The preferred place is Zoom.

Contact me with questions or concerns. I look forward to restarting the book group

## **Directory Update**

by Susan Paxson, Membership Committee

Since Ali Peters is officially our new minister, and it is the beginning of a new church year, I want to update the directory. Please check to see that your entry is up-to-date. Please email me if you do not have our electronic copy, contact the office and request it. This is also the time (if you are relatively new) to let me know you would like to be in it if you are not already. The information I need is:

Full name

Home address

Email

Cell phone or home phone if you prefer (or both)

Photo

I will wait until the week of September 11th to do the update, so please try to get the information to me by September 10th. Thank you for helping me make this document as useful as possible!

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**“Getting to Know You”**  
Interview by Carol Jagers

## **Welcome Ali Peters Our New Minister**

Ali Peters was born in the village of Corfu in western New York midway between Buffalo and Rochester. When she was two years old, her father was called to be the minister of a Presbyterian church in the small town of Stirling, New Jersey outside the Newark and New York City metropolitan area. Her family which included her mom, dad, and older brother Trevor lived in the manse or house on the church grounds. Ali recalls spending many happy hours riding her bike in the church parking lot and popping into the rectory to visit her dad as he worked.

In high school Ali paraded as a color guard in the marching band, played the tuba in the concert band, and marched in the drum corps which won a world championship.

The first college Ali attended was right here in Ohio at the College of Wooster where she earned her Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies and a minor in mathematics.

After college she moved to Philadelphia to work with the girl scout organization as a grant specialist. This office job did not provide the engagement with people that she craved, so after a loathsome year there, she secured a position as a case manager with Big Brothers Big Sisters of America in Newark, New Jersey. After a couple of years in that organization, she decided to try teaching in order to be more engaged and hands-on with children. Her first two years as a teacher were spent as a middle school math instructor in a Newark, New Jersey charter school. The work days were extremely long with no breaks and the work load was overwhelming. Ali recalls leaning heavily upon her Unitarian Universalist church community at that time; and she thanks her mother, who was also a Presbyterian minister, for steering her in the direction of the U.U.'s. For the next two years, Ali was employed as a math teacher by the Plainfield, N.J. school district where she saw clearly the benefits of working under a union contract.

What Ali realized at this point is that she really wants to cultivate a community that empowers its members to wrestle with the big, important life questions in order to create greater depth and meaning in their lives. Thus, in 2017 she began her studies at Union Theological Seminary in New York City and graduated with a Master of Divinity degree with a concentration on Interreligious Engagement. After serving as a student minister at First Unitarian New Jersey in Fanwood, N.J., she served as intern minister then as assistant minister at Fox Valley U.U. Fellowship in Appleton, Wisconsin. It is at this church that she will be ordained on November 12, 2022. More information will be coming on how we can watch Ali's ordination ceremony live that day.

Besides embarking on a new career as the full time minister of our church, Ali exchanged wedding vows this past May with her life partner Justin, who works as a web journalist and critic. They have begun their married life together in Berea, a brand new community for both of them.

May the path they forge together in the future be rich and rewarding, and may Ali's vision of a powerfully engaged church community come to be!



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## **We Celebrate Our Heritage**

by Carol Jordan

Thirty-five years ago this November, 31 persons signed the new charter to create our beloved community, SouthWest Unitarian Universalist Church. This year on Sunday, November 6, members and friends are invited to celebrate this important date in SWUU history. Save the date: Sunday, November 6. Details will come later but mark your calendars and plan to join your fellow SWUU community for this special service. We will be marking our founding in 1987, our move to our present church building in 2010, closing the church building and Zooming through the Covid -19 pandemic, and our return to full services. Our membership has grown from 31 to 77 with many friends also joining in worship and activities.

Emily Heath Wilson, a charter member and excellent historian of SWUU, wrote a detailed history of how our community came about.

*UU leaders in the Cleveland Metropolitan Area and the Ohio-Meadville District decided to try to start a new congregation in the southwest Cleveland suburbs, an area experiencing significant population growth. Rev. Craig Roshaven, an ordained UU minister, and Carl Kelley, an active layman at West Shore UU Church, were leaders. West Shore pledged \$20,000 in start-up funds.*

*An advertisement in suburban newspapers announced an organizational meeting for March 8, 1987. Twenty people attended and volunteers planned the first Sunday morning service for May 3 at Zellers Elementary School in Strongsville. Services continued with guest speakers and potlucks in homes during the summer. By fall the charter was ready and 31 people signed the Membership Book. Current members who are also charter members are Keith Matthews, Sherry Spencer, Judith Newell, David Newell, Laura Urbanic, Lee Longo Beuther, William Beuther, Ellen Hansen-Ellis and Kenneth Ellis.*

The congregation grew to 50 active members in the church year 1990 – 1991. Meeting in Zellers and then the Strongsville Center School was not an easy arrangement. One annual report describes the process for Sunday morning: “At the appointed time, cars would wheel into the parking lot, trunks would fly open, boxes would appear and out of them would come chalices, hymnals, signs, orders of service and the rest of the accoutrements needed for a Sunday morning service.”

When the rent was increased on the Strongsville Center School space, the congregation voted to move to Baldwin-Wallace College’s Kulas Hall. The first service was held January 21, 2001. Fundraising included the annual garage sale, sale of Entertainment Books, grocery receipts and airport rides. The Annual Service Auction raised more than \$4,000. Financially, SWUU was in the black.

After 23 years meeting as “the church in a box,” as SWUU was fondly called, the congregation found a potential property at 6320 Royalton Rd., North Royalton. The building, built in 1896, had been Disciple Church, most recently a Masonic Temple, and home of the Royalton Players. On September 12, 2010, SWUU held its first service. The dramatically remodeled building was now home for Southwest Unitarian Universalist Church.



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## Sharing and Caring

**Jordan Ellis**, son of **Ellen Hansen-Ellis** and **Ken Ellis**, and sister of Adrienne (and Troy) is deploying to Iraq on September 20 with the Army National Guard. This is Jordan's second deployment (the first was to Afghanistan 10 years ago). Sargeant Ellis, a Combat Engineer, is a 10-year veteran of the Ohio National Guard. He is expected to return home next July. Please wish him well, and keep us all in your thoughts as we navigate the year ahead.

*\* please 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 anyone who would like to receive it.