



The Forum



A Southwest Unitarian Universalist Publication

www.swuu.org

May 1, 2021

Sunday Services

10:30 AM

6320 Royalton Road, North Royalton

Join Us On Zoom!



May 2

The Story of SWUU

Our beautiful building on Royalton Rd was dedicated 10 years ago! All are invited to join us in an online celebration of the SWUU church, gardens, and the stories that got us here.

-Led by Rev. Megan Mathieson

Worship Associate: Dan Paxson

Focus Collection: The Edna House for Women

May 9

The Story of Mom

Mother's Day is a mix of joys and sorrows for many of us. Today let's celebrate the many stories of mothers, whether those stories are of nurturing or of loss. Let us celebrate the incredible diversity of the stories of motherhood in our lives.

-Led by Rev. Megan Mathieson

Worship Associate: Mike Gold

May 16

Rewriting Our Stories

The stories we tell about ourselves shape who we are. Are there stories that are holding you prisoner? Today we will take a look at the stories that we tell about ourselves and look at rewriting our own stories.

-Led by Rev. Megan Mathieson

Worship Associate: Anastasia Birosh

May 23

Our Story Books

"We do not experience a world and afterward make up stories to understand it. Stories teach us what is real, what is true, and what is possible." - David Loy. We were all children once. Some of us have had special children in our lives. We will explore some of the children's books that have had a special place in our lives and why we all need them.

-Led by DRE Jenni Papp

Worship Associate: Rae Brewer

May 30

The Story of Our Country

On Memorial Day, let us recall that we all stand on the shoulders of giants. All are welcome to share stories of bravery and sacrifice, whether those stories are about military adventures or simple pleasures.

-Led by Rev. Megan Mathieson

Worship Associate: Ken Ellis

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Message from your Minister

Story

Friends,

Happy May to you! I hope that you are living in the present moment as much as possible these days. This May has a bounty of joy to share with you, so don't let it pass you by without stopping for a moment to enjoy and savor the hope that is in the air.

Our worship theme for this month is "Story." We will be sharing our many stories: the stories that define us as a faith community, the stories that define us as a country. For Mothers Day, we will share our "mother" stories in all of their diversity. I would like to encourage you to approach me if you have a story that you would like to share with the congregation by emailing me at minister@swuu.org.

We will also be discussing the stories that we need to let go of and the stories that we may want to inspect and change. The stories we tell about ourselves as individuals and as a community are extremely powerful. It can be healing to take a second look at the stories that we tell about ourselves and to realize that we have the freedom to rewrite them.

An example of rewriting a story that we tell about ourselves might be found in our relationship to nature. For many years, the Judeo-Christian mindset has told us that man has been a destructive and selfish influence on nature. From the story of being expelled from the Garden of Eden all the way to stories that we see on the news now of polar bears stuck on ice floes, we are surrounded by the story that humankind is at odds with nature. What would happen if we rewrote the way that we tell this story? What if we reframed it and told another story?

We could, instead, tell a story of redemption and reconciliation. Let's learn to tell a story where we humans recognize the error of our ways and do better. Let's live out a story that no longer speaks of humankind being at odds with nature, but rather celebrates and highlights our reciprocal relationship with our Mother Earth. In this way, we can turn our stories of sorrow and pain into stories bursting with gratitude and resilience.

I look forward to worshipping online with you this month! I especially look forward to the special conversations that we will be having on May 16 after the service when we will discuss plans and expectations around reopening. In this way, we are creating our own story! All are welcome!

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

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Focus Collection for May: The Edna House for Women

by Debby Gorencic, Social Justice Committee

For the month of May the Social Justice Committee researched several organizations that have not previously been supported by SWUU. After careful consideration we selected The Edna House for Women to be the recipient of the May Focus Collection. Like all of the recipients we support, The Edna House is a local 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that aligns with our UU Principles. It is sustained entirely through donations from individuals and corporations.

Founded in 2004, the vision of The Edna House is that "every woman who desires sobriety has the opportunity to achieve it". Their mission is "to give women an opportunity to recover from alcohol and drug addiction by providing a safe, sober place to live and to learn life skills in order to maintain 12-step based sobriety throughout their lifetime". Several aspects of The Edna House Program are ingrained in their mission. Women stay until they are healed. While the program starts with a 6 month stay, there is no maximum length to recovery at The Edna House. They also believe that a woman's ability to pay should not stand in the way of her opportunity to get sober. Additionally, the program is not a one-shot chance. There is no restriction on the number of times a woman can re-enter The Edna House Program.

Focus Collection donations can be made by mailing a check to SWUU, 6320 Royalton Rd., North Royalton, OH 44133 or through the Vanco GivePlus website or mobile app (iPhone or Android). Thank you for your generosity.

Urban Hope News

by Jan Wehn, Social Justice Committee

Debby, Eleanor, Nick and I packed bags for Urban Hope, Sunday, April 11. It was a beautiful day, and there was a nice crowd. Nancy donated a Ham, and so we made substantial and tasty ham sandwiches along with the usual accompaniments. They were very much appreciated. Most of the shelters are closing Mid-April, and so there will be more people in the camps and on the streets. The need for food becomes greater. Next month we will be going on May 30, and the following month on June 20. We still have enough cash to help buy the supplies. Thank you all!

SWUU's Second Welcome Session

by Susan Paxson, Membership Committee

On Saturday, May 15th at 10:30, the membership committee invites newcomers to attend a zoom meeting to find out more about SouthWest UU. We are excited to see that new people have found us in our virtual space and we would love to get to meet you even if it is not in person! This will be our second meeting. As with the first one in February, it will be an informal virtual gathering where we can find out what brought you to our church and you can ask questions you might have about our religious community. We hope you will come so we can get to know you! You can attend simply by joining with our regular zoom link which is used for services and many informal gatherings. Contact Susan for more information. Hope to "see" you there!

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Auction Update

by Steve Doucette, Stewardship Committee

Results: Well, our auction closed, and we have great news. We raised \$6,284. That's more than last year's auction, and more than we predicted for this year! Thank you to everyone who participated with auction offerings and with bids/purchases. Your support will help to keep us on a stable financial footing. And we're all looking forward to reconnecting with one another as we give/receive services and items.

Questions you might have now

How do I pay? You will receive an invoice by email with directions on how to pay; but you don't have to wait for the invoice. If you log into the auction website and click on the *My Statement* tab, you will see an itemized list of your purchases and a total amount. You can pay in two ways:

1. Send a check to: Southwest Unitarian Universalist Church, 6320 Royalton Rd, North Royalton, OH 44133, Please indicate Auction on your check.
2. Pay Online at the Vanco Give Plus Website: <https://tinyurl.com/swuu-give-plus>. Please indicate Auction.

How do I provide the services/items I offered? Log into the auction website and click on the Statement Tab. Scroll down and you will see who purchased your offerings. You can send a group email to all of them, and you can send an individual email by clicking on the buyer's name. The buyer's phone number is provided.

How do I obtain the services/items I purchased? In most cases you will be contacted by the donor. If you have a need to contact the donor, just click on the donor's name on your Statement, and you will be able to send an email. The donor's phone number is also provided.

Feel free to email me (stephendoucette@gmail.com) or call (216-798-8820) if you run into difficulties and thanks for your support!

Adopt-a-Highway!

by Susan Paxson, Coordinator

I am thrilled to announce that ODOT has finally lifted the suspension on the Adopt a Highway program and we are able to schedule clean-ups. If you have driven by the entrance and exit ramps connecting Pearl Road and I-71, you know that our clean-ups have been sorely missed. I, for one, cannot wait to get out there and beautify our green space which we have been taking care of for 15 years. We will definitely be following the SWUU protocol of being at least 6 ft away from those with whom we do not live. Because we are not planning to eat, we will not have to worry about the number of people who are involved. If you have never done a highway clean-up with us before, here is what you need to know. We meet at 9:00AM in the parking lot of the Islander Apartments which are located on the east side of Pearl road across from Sunnyside Auto dealership and just north of the I-71 Interchange. The turn is next to a Shell station.

Before we do the clean-up, we put on our vests, take a bag, and (new this year) sign a release form which ODOT requires for every cleanup. Our first clean-up is scheduled for **Saturday, May 8th**. We are usually finished in about an hour so you can still relax for the rest of the day! There is a short training for anyone who has never participated. If you would like to join us, just text or email and I will come early to do that with any new folks. I hope to see you there to do our part to take care of the earth and get some exercise at the same time! It feels great to do something normal for a change!

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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 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

Anniversaries

by Carol Jordan, Membership Committee

From the Membership committee: Six members of SWUU will celebrate member anniversaries this month. Mary and Tom Brooks joined 15 years ago, May 28, 2006. Joining five years ago, May 22, 2026 were John Goga, Dodi Lettus, Sharron Abbey Gold and Mike Gold.

My Invisible Backpack: Reflections on and Learning About my white Privilege A New Monthly Column in the SWUU Forum by anastasia birosh (they/them)

A little bit about me, I was born white, and raised as female in a very binary world. Binary doesn't fit anymore and neither does white male patriarchy and white supremacist culture. Just so you are aware, the title of this column is inspired by an article penned by Peggy McIntosh called "white Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack." (see link at the bottom of this column)

Since, as a congregation we are starting serious discussions about the why's and wherefores of the 8th Principle, and forming the new Antiracism Taskforce Committee, I figure there is no time like the present to begin to share what I've learned and am still learning on my journey to becoming a white antiracist.

I was recently asked: "I know there are many books and resources to read in regards to dismantling racism. What do you think is the best one to start with?" Thinking about my own journey, there simply is not just one book that I can recommend as my journey toward being a white antiracist involved many steps and happened in fits and starts.

In responding to the questioner, I answered:

This is difficult. We all have different learning styles and preferences for the kind of books we read and work through. I have limited it to four titles – all have been important to me on my self-re-education journey.

The first book I would recommend is **A People's History of the United States** by Howard Zinn. I will simply say that had I not read this book, my self-examination and understanding would not be where it is today in 2021. This is the book that opened my eyes to the fact that the United States is founded upon the genocide and displacement of Indigenous People. I read the book in 2002 for the first time, and re-read it in 2016.

The second is **Between the World and Me** by Ta-Nehisi Coates. It is said, and I paraphrase, "before you judge a person, walk a mile in their shoes." This book helped me to see the world through a Black father's eyes. Reading this book engaged my heart and my feelings.

The third is **me and white supremacy: Combat Racism, Change the World, and Become a Good Ancestor** by Layla F. Saad. My suggestion is to take time, but not too much and be willing to circle back when memories surface. This book showed me how full of shit I still was and can be.

The last is **The Cost of Privilege: Taking on the System of white supremacy and Racism** by Chip Smith. It helped me see the interconnectedness of white supremacy and capitalism, and how this system keeps on replicating itself.

I concluded my response by writing: "I'm sorry that I just couldn't pick one. You know your own learning style better than me, and that's why I included a bit about why it's on my list."

I hope that you will choose to journey with me toward becoming the Beloved Community. Until next month, Peace.

Link: <https://admin.artsci.washington.edu/sites/adming/files/unpacking-invisible-knapsack.pdf>

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SWUU VIRTUAL PLEDGE DRIVE

by Lydia Avery, Treasurer on behalf of the Stewardship Committee

May is the month we hold our Annual Pledge Drive at SWUU. For those who are new or newer, our Pledge Drive accounts for roughly 80% of the revenue income that enables us to enjoy wonderful services, music, terrific religious education programs, spiritual community support to one another, and support to worthy social causes to neighbors in the community at large.

As you know, the past year has been challenging. Due to the pandemic, we couldn't meet in person, and many of us were not able to make or meet our pledge. Offsetting that, our expenses were lower than budget due to the facility closure, careful fiscal management, and the vacant office manager position. In addition, other generous members and friends sent additional monetary gifts. As a result, we are on stable financial footing right now and we don't anticipate having to take money from our reserves to pay our bills and staff salaries. We should just about break even.

A little financial background. Our fiscal year runs from July 1 through June 30. We are completely self-supporting, meaning that all our revenue comes from our members and friends. (Again, 80% of that comes from our Annual Pledge Drive.) We began an endowment a few years ago and we also have CDs in a local bank. We are, however, not a "rich" church and that is why we watch our finances so carefully. In a sense, we live paycheck to paycheck, but we have a safety factor in our reserves. Information on our finances is always available to any member at any time, and there will be a spreadsheet ready for the June congregational meeting so that members are aware of our budget.

As we look forward, we expect to reopen early in the fiscal year. At that point, our expenses will rise to more normal levels. We will probably need to fill the open office manager position. Additionally, we would like to provide more normal salary increases for our staff, who received minimal increases this past year. They have done fantastic work this year to accommodate the needs of SWUU. Rev. Meg, Jenni, Ryan and Kristen pivoted flawlessly to make our community stay as strong and connected as possible during the pandemic.

We ask that you consider the whole of our budget and how you can best contribute. The UU Association recommends 3 to 5% of annual income, but each of us has to consider our own financial situation. If you can increase your pledge, we'd ask that you please do so. If you are unable to increase your pledge, please try to continue the amount of your current pledge. If you have not pledged in the past, please consider making one this year. No matter what the size, all pledges are appreciated. Pledges can be paid monthly, annually, etc.

You'll receive an email the first week of May with the details of how to make a pledge. This year we will be trying to do most of the Pledge Drive virtually and through email. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact, Lydia Avery.

2021-22 should be a wonderful year of renewal and community for us. I look forward to seeing all of you and being together soon.

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Sharing and Caring

Carol Jagers writes: Please keep my husband **Jim Jagers** in your thoughts as he undergoes kidney surgery to have a tumor removed on May 6. We appreciate all your positive support!

Please send **Nancy Matsko** love, prayers, and support as she is dealing with some challenges at this time.

One of our beloved members, **David Slawson**, partner to **Sylvia Banks**, passed away gently in his sleep on April 4th. The family is planning a Zoom memorial for him in the future. Details to come.

Keith Mathews fell and broke his left wrist doing yard work last Tuesday. He seems to be in surprisingly good spirits He is at Parkside Villa receiving great care and thinks he will be in better shape than before the accident.

Please keep **Sherry Spencer** in your thoughts and prayers as she continues to deal with the loss of her siblings.

** send your joys and sorrows to 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.