



The Forum



A Southwest Unitarian Universalist Publication

www.swuu.org

December 1, 2022

Sunday Services

10:30 AM

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



December 4

Bringing Wonder into Winter: A Multigenerational Service

As the days get colder and the nights get longer, what helps sustain us? Join us for a multigenerational service as we ground ourselves in wonder before heading into winter.

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

Worship Associates: Leslie VanKuren

Focus Collection: UUSC Guest at Your Table

December 11

Growing into a Life of Wonder

With every challenge that we find ourselves in that we cannot fix on our own, there is this inward desire to see the awe and wonder that comes through for us, to rescue us, to provide that miracle that we so desperately need.

-Led by Rev. Samuel Prince

Worship Associate: Dan Paxson

December 18

Blue Holiday

For some of us, the holiday hubbub may bring along complicated feelings that are not always joyful. Join us this Sunday for a contemplative space to honor our feelings and experiences at this time of year. No expectations, just comfort and connection.

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

Worship Associate: Rae Brewer & Sarajane Willson

December 24

Christmas Eve

Join us for a Christmas Eve service of stories, carols, and candlelight. The service will begin at 5:30 pm.

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

December 25

Christmas Breakfast Church (in-person only)

Come and share in breakfast and some informal worship time together in celebration of Christmas morning. Please contact Rev. Ali (minister@swuu.org) if you plan to attend and if you would like to bring food to share.

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

Worship Associate: anastasia birosh

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Message from your Minister

Dear Ones,

In the Christian tradition of my heritage, December holds the season of Advent. The word “advent,” is derived from the Latin word for “a coming, an approach, or an arrival.” In Christian liturgical tradition, the season of Advent is a time of waiting, anticipating, and preparing for the coming of Jesus, whose birth is celebrated on Christmas. However, long before Advent became a part of the Christian calendar, Pagan communities would set aside the weeks before the winter solstice as a sacred time of waiting – waiting, anticipating, and preparing for the sun’s return after the longest night of the year. This season calls us into waiting, anticipating, and preparing ourselves for...something.

What a peculiar idea that is. Amid the hubbub leading up to the holidays we are called into a time of waiting, anticipating, and preparing ourselves. Rather than a season of *doing doing doing*, we are called into a way of *being*, a way of being that requires stillness, attention, and openness. It is about being present to the possibility of wonder – whether that wonder arrives with the birth of a baby, the slight and gradual return of the sun, the life-giving power of community and connection, the beautiful design of a single snowflake, or something else entirely. We must be present to these moments if we are to notice that which is wondrous.

As I reflect on this season of waiting, I’m grateful for the words of writer, artist, and minister, Jan Richardson. In her book, *Night Visions* she says:

“The Season of Advent means there is something on the horizon the likes of which we have never seen before. It is not possible to keep it from coming, because it will. That’s just how Advent works. What is possible is to not see it, to miss it, to turn just as it brushes past you. And you begin to grasp what it was you missed, like Moses in the cleft of the rock, watching God’s hindquarters fade in the distance.

So stay.

Sit.

Linger.

Tarry.

Ponder.

Wait.

Behold.

Wonder.

There will be enough time for running. For rushing. For worrying. For pushing. For now, stay. Wait. Something is on the horizon.”

That is the blessing I send with you into this season, dear SWUU family. *Stay. Sit. Linger. Tarry. Ponder. Wait. Behold. Wonder. Something is on the horizon.*

With love,
Rev. Ali

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Focus Collection for December: Guest at Your Table

by Jan Wehn, Social Justice Committee

December is the month that we support the UUSC's "Guest at Your Table" initiative. GAYT is an intergenerational organization working with 20 countries and has over 50 grassroots partners in the efforts to support Human Rights. This year's theme is **Hope, Courage, Action**. Our shared goal is to create "a world free from oppression, where all can realize their full human rights." The UUSC believes that we need bold change in order to assist communities most directly impacted by injustice. Donations help advance community led initiatives around the world. Donations of \$150 or more are matched by the UU Congregation of Shelter Rock in Manahassat NY.

Generally we ask you to put a check or use Vanco in our collection basket or send directly to the church. But for those who want to take advantage of the matching it is best to send directly to UUSC.

To donate online: uuscs.org/givetoguest.

To mail directly make checks out to UUSC with Guest at Your Table or GAYT in the memo section. Mail to UUSC PO Box 808, Newark, NJ 07101-0808. If possible let them know you are from SWUU in North Royalton, OH.

Thank you for supporting the important cause.

Urban Hope Outreach Update

by Nancy Peltola, Social Justice Committee

Sunday, November 13 was a cold, blustery day as a large group of hungry guests entered the Urban Hope Storefront to be warmed by community, coffee, and a generous variety of delicious foods. Jan Wehn, Debby Gorencic, and I served Chicken Rice Casserole, Macaroni Salad, Cheese Sticks, Hard Boiled Eggs, puddings, packaged crackers, candy, and Homemade Pumpkin Snickerdoodle Cookies. Personal toiletries, socks, and underwear were also distributed and appreciated. Many thanks to everyone in the SWUU community who contributed foods and money to make our monthly outreach so successful.

Our next visit will be Sunday, December 11 from 3-5:00. We always need help chatting with guests, serving food, and washing dishes, so please consider joining us! You can sign up on the poster in the lobby or feel free to contact one of us on the SJ Committee for more information. Your continued support is valued and appreciated.

GCC Action Coming Up!

by Ellen Hansen-Ellis

Just a reminder that next Tuesday evening, December 6th, Greater Cleveland Congregations is holding a public hearing on the crisis in our community of youth bindover (children under age 18 tried in adult court and, if convicted, sentenced to adult prison). The hearing is at **7:00 pm sharp** at Olivet Institutional Baptist Church, 8712 Quincy Avenue, and on Zoom. Whether attending in person or via Zoom, register by going to this link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEldeyuqj4vG9S95WV76F940ZS58XdpX6kR>

Let's pack the house, show SWUU's commitment to GCC and our neighbors, and send Cuyahoga County a message.

Interested in going in person? Contact, Ellen Hansen-Ellis (ehansenellis@gmail.com) or Susan Paxson (susan@paxson.us) for ride-sharing.

Any questions about the event? Contact GCC at info@gcc-ohio.org. Want to learn more about it? See the flyer on the following page. Hope to see you there!

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Justice for Our Children

*A Public Hearing to End Abuse of
Discretionary Youth Bindover*

Tuesday, December 6, 2022

Olivet Institutional Baptist Church
or Via Zoom

Youth bindovers can have many negative impacts not only on the youth, but the community as a whole.

Join GCC in publicly calling for the **end to abuse of Discretionary Youth Bindovers.**

Register here for the Action:



[https://tinyurl.com/December-
Action](https://tinyurl.com/December-Action)

Zoom link opens at 6:30pm. Action begins at 7:00pm sharp.

Email Vivian at vivian@gcc-ohio.org for questions or assistance regarding registration.

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Board Happenings

by Mike Gold, Board President

I am pleased to announce that Steve Doucette has assumed the position of Treasurer, succeeding Lydia Avery, who has served SWUU in this role for many years. We are so grateful to Lydia for her service and for all she has done to monitor our financial situation as we have grown, added professional staff, and survived Covid. Lydia has worked with Steve (along with Carolyn and our financial consultant Kristen) so there could be a seamless transition. The Treasurer is an important officer position in the church, responsible for keeping the Board of Trustees apprised of SWUU's financial status on a monthly basis.

As most of you know, we were without heat for a week during one of the coldest spells we've had so far this Fall. The heating system now has new heat exchangers and SWUU is warming back up. The repairs by the North Royalton-based company, Sal's Heating and Air Conditioning, were expensive, but the system should be good for many years to come. Because many in the congregation provided space heaters and our Building & Grounds Chair, Dan Paxson, rented and installed a powerful propane heater, we were able to hold Sunday service and Teatime for Peace in-person on November 20.

Teatime for Peace was attended by close to 40 people and left everybody feeling really positive about the connection with our Muslim guests. The event was initiated by anastasia birosh and organized by a group of SWUU folks along with Wali Shariff, of the Ummah Center, Isam Zaiem, of CAIR-Cleveland, and April Stoltz, of Teatime for Peace. Besides great discussion, anastasia read an original poem and Adrienne Ellis and Ellen Hansen-Ellis provided a beautiful musical interlude.

Four Board members attended an online seminar series on Helpful Board Habits and are presenting recommendations to the Board: initiate a Safety & Security Task Force; make Board meeting minutes available on Google Docs; sponsor a Volunteer Fair where people can learn about all the groups and committees at the church and sign up for them; review and possibly update the descriptions for the Board President and Vice-President to reflect the increased role of the VP.

On the Social Justice front, SWUU's support of Urban Hope continues, thanks primarily to the efforts of Jan Wehn, Debby Gorencic and Nancy & Denny Peltola. The Anti-Racism Task Force will be presenting their ideas of ways to implement the 8th Principle at SWUU. Ellen Hansen-Ellis and Susan Paxson are our liaisons to the Greater Cleveland Congregation (GCC) and will be attending a hearing on youth bindovers on December 6. And there is discussion on how to bring more of a culture of engaged social justice involvement to our church.

The Board is planning to sponsor two delegates for online attendance at the 2023 UUA General Assembly June 21-25. The event is in Pittsburgh. If interested in applying to be a delegate, contact Adam Miller. One of the issues being considered will be proposed revisions to Article II of the UUA Bylaws, Principles and Purposes, which is the covenant to which all UUA congregations pledge themselves to. The last time there was a revision was in 1987. The new proposal attempts to incorporate the 8th Principle and suggested edits to some of the other seven principles. Rev. Ali first mentioned this in her 11/20 service. More discussion and info will be coming in the months ahead.

Finally, we celebrate our newly ordained minister, who is now officially Reverend Ali. The ceremony took place on Nov. 12 at Fox Valley UU Fellowship in Wisconsin, where Ali previously served as Assistant Minister. SWUU congratulated Rev. Ali by presenting her with some tree-themed gifts at the 11/20 service, thanks to the efforts of Gay Cady.

For more information on any of the above or to get involved please contact me at president@swuu.org.

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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.

Do you need to contact someone on the SWUU Staff?

Rev. Ali Peters (Minister)	(440) 305-0631
Mike Gold (President)	
Carolyn Stevens (Church Administrator)	(440) 877-1686
Carolyn Stevens (Director of Religious Education)	

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

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 and tell us which you want.

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

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Save the Date!

**Annual Service Auction
Saturday, February 4, 2022
In Person Event Starts at 4:30 pm.**

by Steve Doucette, Social Justice Committee

After 2 years of pandemic, the Service Auction is coming back as an in-person event! If you have health concerns, don't worry. You'll be able to participate by appointing a proxy, and everyone will be able to bid online on unsold services after the live event.

The Service Auction is our biggest Fundraiser Party of the year. You can expect a Chili Cookoff as a dinner, and fun activities for the whole family including kids! PLEASE, if you have attended the auction party before, spread the word and help new people understand how it works.

Here is the rundown of how SWUU raises money while providing social opportunities. Members and friends decide on an event they would like to organize and host, or a service they can provide. (Things like hikes, dinners, game nights, concerts or sing-alongs at your home or at church, computer service, movie nights, airport deliveries, cleaning or repairs, haircuts, teaching a skill, framed photos or other artwork, backyard BBQs.) At the auction, people sign up for or bid on these services/items. All money raised goes to the Church. No cash changes hands at the auction itself. Once the auction is over, you receive an invoice for your purchases.

Here's the plan:

- During the month of January, congregants can enter their offerings on our auction website as we have done for the past two years.
- During the weeks leading up to the auction, we will be able to see all the offerings on the auction website.
- February 4, Saturday, 4:30 pm. In-person auction. Folks unable to attend may appoint a proxy.
- February 6, Monday. Auction opens virtually. Folks can sign up for unsold services and bid on biddable items on the auction website.
- February 18, Saturday. Auction Closes.

Here's what you can do right now:

- Mark your calendar to save the date: Saturday, February 4 at 4:30 pm.
- Start thinking about what you might offer in the auction.

That's all you have to do right now. You'll receive a lot more detailed information in early January. Questions? Call or email me. (phone 216-798-8820, email stephenbdoucette@gmail.com).

THANKS!

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Help us Make History

As a follow-up to our 35th Anniversary celebration at SWUU this year, the Committee on Ministry is initiating a project we are calling “SWUUSTORIES”.

Long-time and more recent members of our congregation all have one thing in common: we feel connected to our SWUU community, and we can identify one or two stories or memories that really stand out to us. Throughout the year, it is our intention to record these important stories from our members and to compile them in an archive.

Through the sharing of these stories, we hope to strengthen and celebrate that deep sense of community we all appreciate. There will be options for providing these memories as digital audio recordings or in written form if you choose.

Each will be a meaningful personal reflection that collectively will create a powerful reminder of how SWUU has touched all of us in various ways.

Hopefully this process will be ongoing, extending beyond this year and well into the future, making it a living repository of sorts where we can all look back periodically as a way of re-engaging with our SWUU family.

Sign-up sheets will be available in early January for folks interested in participating.

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Cookie Baking/Tree Trimming Party at SWUU by Susan Paxson, Membership

Here at Southwest UU, we have a long-held tradition of baking cookies together around the holidays. Covid prevented us from getting together the last two years, but Ken Ellis and I feel it is time to bring it back. Everyone brings their own dough or batter, and we work together to bake lots of different kinds of cookies. At the end of the afternoon, everyone goes home with a variety of cookies instead of the one kind they started out with. We usually save some for our Christmas Eve Service as well.

While the bakers are working on the cookies downstairs, others can work with Ken on putting up and decorating the SWUU tree. We hope you will join in this fun multigenerational gathering on Saturday, December 10th from 2-4 p.m. It is a wonderful way to be together for unstructured socializing. For more information, contact Susan at susan@paxson.us or text 216-543-9387. If you can't be there the whole time, come when you can! Hope to see you there!

Billy Williams's Eagle Scout Project by Janet Williams

Last Monday Billy became an Eagle Scout. We are so proud of his hard work in making this long-term goal!!!

Billy designed and created a playground communication board for the Early Learning Preschool in Strongsville for his Eagle Scout project. This board will help children with communication needs better relate to his/her peers and caregivers. He was featured with Strongsville City Schools, [60 seconds with the Superintendent](#), and [interviewed with Channel 3](#). This week he received the "Extra Mile Award" from Strongsville's superintendent and the school board. He's standing a bit taller knowing he made a difference in the lives of these "little guys!" The Williams family is very proud of him!



The Forum



*Ellen & Ken
Cordially Invite You to Our*

ANNUAL NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY

**December 31
8:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m.**

32 Manning Dr.
Berea, Ohio

No R.S.V.P. necessary
Bring finger food/ beverage of choice if desired
kellismtn@gmail.com
440-655 6321

The Forum

Sharing and Caring

Susan and Dan Paxson are thrilled to have all of their kids and their families home for the holidays. Susan will be taking care Rowan during the week before Christmas, so feel free to reach out if you want to get together with us! I am starting to make a list of things that sound fun, and would love sharing the joy with others; it is hard not to smile when you are around a 21 month-old.

Cynthia Mondia is finally getting some relief from the pain she has been experiencing in her back. The treatment seems to be working! You may have noticed that she only had a cane the last week of November!

** please 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.