



# The Forum



A Southwest Unitarian Universalist Publication

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

January 1, 2023

## Sunday Services

10:30 AM

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



### **January 1**

*Starting the New Year With Mindfulness and Joy*

Internal awareness is essential to developing peace, joy and freedom. During our time together we will explore how to live mindfully in the NOW, and to tap into the inner sources that determine our place in the world.

-Led by Gay Cady

Worship Associates: Sarajane Willson & Carter Porter

Focus Collection: Greater Cleveland Habitat for Humanity

### **January 8**

*Turning of the Year*

Join us for our service readings, songs, and ritual as we look toward the coming year and honor the life events and transitions from the past year in our community.

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

Worship Associate: Ken Ellis

### **January 15**

*Centering in Beloved Community*

How can the practice of community help bring us back to our spiritual center? What does beloved community require from us? Join us this Sunday as we wrestle with these questions.

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

Worship Associate: Carter Porter

### **January 22**

*Finding our Center in our Bodies*

Our bodies are an integral part of who we are. This can be easy to forget as we so often live in our heads. Join us this Sunday as we center in our glorious, divine and diverse bodies.

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

Worship Associate: Leslie VanKuren

### **January 29**

*TBA*

Please see our website later in the month for details.

-Led by TBA

Worship Associate: Deb Celinski

# The Forum

## Message from your Minister

Dear Ones,

“New Year, New You!”

That’s the promise that we are inundated with at this time of year, right?

“New Year, New You!”

It’s a promise that the new year is an opportunity for a clean slate – a chance to reinvent ourselves.

I’m going to spare you my “you are already enough” speech (as true and important as it is), because I get the appeal. It can be nice to have a point in time that we designate as a reset. It can feel helpful to feel like we have a chance at a fresh start every year.

But the truth of the matter is that we are always new and we are always old, aren’t we? Our lives constantly reach both forwards and backwards. Backwards our lives reach for roots and memory and context –we reach backwards through our lives, backwards through generations of people who have shaped us. At the same time, our lives are constantly reaching forward toward hope and possibility and what is next. We are born and reborn in every moment – reincarnations of the past that also hold the potential for the future. Always new and always old.

The new year is a threshold that reminds us of this reaching in both directions. As we occupy this threshold, it is an opportunity to reflect on the past year, consider where we are, and also look ahead to what can be. It’s a time that calls us into deep centering.

Our worship theme for the month of January is “Finding Your Center.” I hope you’ll join us as we explore this theme together.

I also hope you’ll join me in moving through this threshold time with a breath prayer from writer, poet, and contemplative, Cole Arthur Riley. She is the founder of the Black Liturgies project and she offers us this simple prayer to help us breathe our way into the new year.

Inhale:

As it ends, I’ll hold memory.

Exhale:

As we go, I’ll hold hope.

Blessings to you in the new year, beloveds,  
Rev. Ali

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## **Focus Collection for January: Greater Cleveland Habitat for Humanity** by Nancy Peltola, Social Justice Committee

Founded in 1976, Habitat for Humanity works to build, repair and sell affordable homes to families with a 0% interest mortgage. Habitat concentrates its work in focused communities to have a greater impact on helping revitalize neighborhoods. The Greater Cleveland chapter just celebrated its 35th anniversary by selling a record 25+ homes. SWUU has proudly supported their efforts for many years, recognizing that Habitat's mission is consistent with several UU Principles involving dignity, compassion, and justice for all.

To learn more about Greater Cleveland Habitat for Humanity, please visit [www.clevelandhabitat.org](http://www.clevelandhabitat.org). Another way to help transform communities is to consider shopping or donating tools, furniture, plumbing supplies, etc. at the Re-Store discount home improvement store. Your focus collection contribution can be made by check (made out to SWUU with Habitat on the memo line) and mailed directly to the church or put in the collection basket. Or use the Vanco GivePlus app. One check will then be presented to Greater Cleveland Habitat to support their work. Your generosity and kindness allows families to have a safe place to shelter, to teach their children, and to build stronger futures. Thank you!

## **Urban Hope Outreach Update** by Jan Wehn, Social Justice Committee

Debby Gorencic and I went to Urban Hope on a cold Sunday, December 11. Thanks to the generous financial contributions, I was able to buy Fried Chicken for a special treat. Besides that, we had Macaroni Salad, Cheese Sticks, Chips, Homemade Cookies, and Hardboiled Eggs. The attendance was a little lower than usual, because Trinity Church has also offered a warming center where they serve food from 1-5. No matter, our guests were very grateful and no-one left hungry. It was a very positive atmosphere. We return Sunday, January 8. We decided to take down the sign up sheet. There is a box for packaged foods, and if you care to come down, please let me know. Financial contributions are gratefully accepted. Thanks for your continued support.

## **Women' Fellowship Gathering this Month** by Susan Paxson

Now that the holidays are over, I just want to remind all of our SWUU women about an opportunity to get to know others at SWUU. Each month a different person hosts an informal pot luck gathering at their home or at the church for sharing and connecting. This month, I will kicking off 2023 with a burrito/bowl night at my home in Parma Heights on Friday January 27th at 6:30 pm. Contact me at [susan@paxson.us](mailto:susan@paxson.us), or 216-543-9387 if you would like to come. All people who identify as female or gender non-binary are welcome. I am hoping others might consider hosting other months for our regular fourth Friday gatherings!

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## **SAVE THE DATE**

**Sunday, January 22, after service, there will be a State of the Church meeting.** We're halfway through the current church year, so it's time for the Board of Trustees to check in and share how we are doing and what we are planning. You can attend either in-person or on Zoom.

It will be informative and the Committee on Ministry will be passing out a short survey to check the pulse and preferences of the congregation. Not to worry if you can't attend in person. The survey will be sent out on Mail Chimp for those at home to fill out.

## **2023 UUA GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

The UUA General Assembly for 2023 is June 21-25 in Pittsburgh. This is the annual meeting for the UUA where participants worship, witness, learn, connect, honor our history and forge our future. Anyone may attend. Our church is planning to send two delegates. If you would like to attend GA and be a delegate please let Rev. Ali or Adam Miller know by mid-January. For more info on General Assembly, check the UUA website or ask Rev. Ali.

## **Winter Institute 2023**

Winter Institute (WI) is a long-held tradition of gathering over President's Day week-end for a mid-winter retreat at Salt Fork State Park in Cambridge, Ohio. This retreat was the brainchild of a group of Summer Institute (SI) attendees who wisely determined that a year between SI gatherings is just TOO LONG to wait to gather with extended Beloved UU Community! This relaxing weekend has been an intimate gathering for UUs of all ages. There are frosty outdoor activities like sledding, hiking and cross-country skiing. For those who choose to stay in their slippers all weekend, there is a beautiful lodge with its many cozy corners and fireplaces. The pool and hot tub are truly a wintertime treat. There are fellow UUs always ready to play board games or to join in the community jigsaw puzzle. We have wonderful community worship services in the morning and evenings.

This year Winter Institute will be held on February 17-20, 2023 at Salt Fork State Park in Cambridge, OH. [Registration is open](#) and all are welcome!

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## Board Happenings

by Mike Gold, Board President

January is shaping up to be a busy month at SWUU as we begin the second half of the church year. We are planning a State of the Church meeting on Sunday, January 22, after the service, where we will share how we are doing and what we are planning. The Committee on Ministry is working on a survey to get your feedback on how the church is doing and what your priorities are. Please save the date and plan on attending either in person or on Zoom. We need your participation.

The Committee on Ministry is also sponsoring SWUUSTories, where folks can share their SWUU stories and the church can create an audio history. This is starting up this month. See the announcement elsewhere in the Forum.

The Anti-Racism Task Force, which worked so hard to inform us all before we voted to approve the 8th Principle, is proposing the creation of a Racial Justice Accountability Committee to carry on this work going forward. The Board has conditionally approved a resolution to accomplish this with the wording to be worked out in the next couple months. Because the creation of a committee needs to be also approved by the congregation, it will be voted on at June's annual meeting.

As of now, our Treasurer is forecasting that we will have to draw money from reserves to meet our spending this year. We are behind in pledge collections from where we were last year and will be raising awareness about pledge commitments as the year progresses. Any gifts to the church are tax deductible. You can also contribute to the church every time you make a purchase on Amazon Smile by selecting SWUU as your charity of choice. The Service Auction, coming up on February 4, is also a great way to give to the church. It's one of the most enjoyable events of the year.

The Board is working on establishing a Safety and Security Task Force to work on best practices for keeping our beloved community safe. Some things are already in the works. On the recommendation of the gas company, Dan Paxson has recently installed a few CO detectors in the building. We will be meeting with the North Royalton Police Department's Community Outreach Officer early this year to go over security procedures.

We are also working on what we're calling a Connection Cafe (Rev. Ali came up with that catchy name), where church groups and committees can explain what they do and attract volunteers. We're hoping to make that happen in March.

Finally, we continue to monitor the status of flu, Covid and RSV cases in our area. We are still asking folks to be vaccinated and boosted for Covid in order to enter our building and encourage everybody to get vaccinated for flu as well. Masks remain optional at SWUU.

Thank you to our wonderful Collaborative Pianist, Marina Kerze, who had her daughters provide a free piano recital for lucky SWUU attendees recently. Also, thanks to our music committee, choir, choir director Janet Williams and the soloists who have been adding so many great sounds to our halls. Thanks to all those who are filling the seats of our sanctuary in-person and at home on Zoom and to those who have added so much to all of our programming. Happy new year and may 2023 be a healthy and blessed one.



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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](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.

## 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](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

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## Plan to Be There!

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

by Steve Doucette, Stewardship Committee

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 on unsold services after the live event.

### Here's an overview:

- Friday, January 6 - congregants can start to enter their offerings on our auction website as we have done for the past two years. You will receive directions via SWUUList and SWUU News.
- Saturday, February 4 at 4:30 pm. - In person auction. Folks unable to attend may appoint a proxy.
- Monday, February 6 - Auction opens virtually for two weeks. Folks can sign up for unsold services and bid on biddable items.

### Why Donate and Participate?

The Service Auction is our biggest Fundraiser Party of the year. It's a wonderful way to make new friends and strengthen current friendships. 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. Not only will this be fun, it's also a critical fundraiser for our congregation.

### How it Works

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, backyard BBQs, concerts or singalongs at your home or at church, computer service, movie nights, airport deliveries, cleaning, repairs, haircuts, teaching a skill, artwork or framed photos created by the donor.) 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.

### What You Can do Right Now

Before the website even opens, you can think about what you might offer as a service or item.

### If You Are Somewhat New to Our Church

Please contact any of the following volunteers who are working on this event to learn how the service auction works. As an added benefit, you might get to know someone better. When I was new, I certainly needed an explanation! Here's who you might call or e mail:

Candy Poissant	candy.poissant@aol.com	440-570-8329
Dru Siley	drusiley@hotmail.com	216-258-3113
Lydia Avery	lydiacavery@outlook.com	440-221-6474
Sarajane Willson	sassyjw@gmail.com	440-503-6363
Sharon Eckert	sharoneckert@outlook.com	440-533-7880
Sharron Abbey	abbeygold@ameritech.com	440-391-8688
Steve Doucette	stephenbdoucette@gmail.com	216-798-8820
Susan Paxson	susan.w.paxson@gmail.com	216-543-9387

THANKS!

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### “Getting to Know You” Interview by Dodi Lettus

**Marina Kerze** is our very talented Collaborative Pianist. She was born in the former USSR and lived in the city of Perm in the Ural region. When she was 22, Marina contacted Margarita Shevchenko, then a member of the Cleveland Institute of Music (CIM), and asked Shevchenko to accept her as a student. Ms. Shevchenko offered Marina a scholarship if she would move to the US. Marina left her homeland and came to Cleveland on her own to study with this internationally renowned pianist. She earned a Masters of Piano Performance at Cleveland State University and studied at Oberlin Conservatory, earning an Artist Diploma there.



Marina comes from a diverse religious background—her mother is Russian and an Orthodox Christian, her father an Orthodox Jew. Marina puts her heart and soul into helping others and loves sharing the beauty of music and performing. Raising her children and passing on the traditions, culture, and knowledge to the next generation is Marina’s main purpose at this time.

Marina and her husband David are parents to two very talented daughters, Sabrina (11) and Dianna (9) both of whom thrilled an enthusiastic audience at SWUU in December, playing an amazing classical piano repertoire that included Debussy, Haydn, Beethoven, and Liszt. Her son, Filipp, age 1 ½, is not playing an instrument yet, but who knows what the future may hold?

She said that SWUU “feels like home”. Marina enjoys being able to play a wide repertoire and finds peace and enjoyment playing the piano at SWUU. In addition to working at SWUU, Marina works at Westlake Music Academy teaching piano, and teaches private students. She has traveled to Italy and Israel where there is “history in every inch”. Marina and her daughters enjoy cooking, particularly healthier food, gluten-free, and sugar-free. Thank you Marina, for sharing your love of music with us!



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### **Help us Make History**

Sign-up sheets will be available in the lobby in early January to share your favorite SWUU stories. There will also be a sheet of prompts to help you compose your story. We are looking to limit the recording sessions to between 10-15 minutes.

The Committee on Ministry and friends are sponsoring this project to record member and non-member stories for all to enjoy.

All of us have one thing in common: we feel connected to our SWUU community, and there are one or two stories or memories that really stand out to us.

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.

# The Forum

## Sharing and Caring

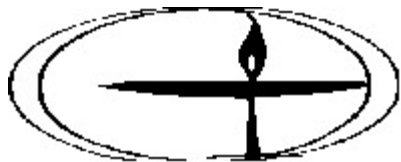
Please keep **David and Judy Newell** in your thoughts and prayers as they are both recovering from the Flu. Ingrid said she knows David will appreciate cards as he (and his cat, Minnie!) are staying with their daughter, Amy. Here is where cards can be sent.

David Newell  
C/O Amy Holt  
8538 Homestead Drive  
Olmsted Falls, Ohio 44138

Judy Newell  
C/O Cardinal Court  
18719 Drake Road  
Strongsville, Ohio 44136

*\* 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.