



The Forum



A Southwest Unitarian Universalist Publication

www.swuu.org

May 1, 2023

Sunday Services

10:30 AM

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



May 7

Music Poetry and Art Sunday

Members and friends will participate in this multigenerational service which lifts up the impact of the arts and creativity on our lives, and on humanity.

-Led by SWUU Music Team: Ellen Hansen-Ellis, Susan Paxson, Katie Maslar, Lydia Avery

Worship Associate: Leslie VanKuren

Focus Collection: Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless

May 14

Imagining a Future for Our Faith

What is at the center of our Unitarian Universalist faith? What binds us together? What do we aspire to be? These are questions that drive the current proposed revisions to our Unitarian Universalist Association's principles, purposes, and sources as articulated in Article II of our UUA by-laws. Join us this Sunday as we wrestle with these questions and imagine what they hold for the future of our UU faith.

-Led by Rae Brewer and anastasia biros

Worship Associate: Rev. Ali Peters

May 21

Flower Ceremony

Each year, after the flowers have bloomed, Unitarian Universalists everywhere celebrate our annual flower ceremony where we honor the diverse gifts we all bring to our communities. This year's flower ceremony marks the 100th anniversary of this ritual that was started by Unitarian minister, Norbert Čapek, in Prague in 1923. We invite you to bring a flower to share as we gather for this treasured tradition.

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

Worship Associate: Sarajane Willson

May 28

The Pillars of Creation are Inside You

Join us as we learn how creativity and expression contribute to the infinite expansion of our universe.

-Led by Ian Anderson, Chaplain for J. W. Barkley Masonic Lodge, North Ridgeville

Worship Associate: Ken Ellis

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Message from your Minister

Creativity

Dear Ones,

My grandmother was an artist. She drew and painted lovely landscapes. My dad was a woodworker. Our family pantry was a beautiful pie-safe cabinet that he built by hand, with tin panels where he punched holes in intricate designs. My mom is a knitter—although, at other points in her life she has also been a weaver and a beader. She knows how to use color and texture to make something magnificent. My brother is a musician. When we were young, there was rarely a night that went by without him improvising something fun and rhythmic on the piano while our family dog howled along.

Me? I dabbled in art and handcrafts and music as a child, but none of it felt like it really stuck. So when I became an adult, I didn't really consider creativity a big part of my life. I must not be a very creative person, I thought.

I didn't realize how important having creative outlets was until I found myself feeling like I had none. It happened during the year after I'd graduated from college – a time when my life was totally focused on landing and keeping a job in the middle of a recession and learning how to “adult.” I was deeply unhappy and feeling uninspired every day. It was this drought of creative engagement that led me to eventually sign up for improv classes, which have changed my life in wonderful ways. It was also this drought of creative engagement that led me into the doors of my first Unitarian Universalist church.

It turns out that cultivating creativity is important for nurturing wellness in our lives – creativity is a huge source of meaning. That's why I'm excited that our worship theme for the month of May is creativity!

And when we talk about creativity, we're not just talking about the arts. As beautiful and important as those are, there are so many other ways we can engage in creativity in our lives too. Creativity comes in all shapes and sizes – we use it in problem solving, in relationships, in day-dreaming, in activism, in gardening, in event planning, in playing games, and in so many other ways, large and small! We are all creative beings.

Where do you feel connected to creativity in your life? I hope you will join us this month as we explore this theme of creativity together!

With love,
Ali

PS. If you ever feel yourself yearning for more meaningful creative engagement, there are great opportunities for that at SWUU! Please feel free to reach out to me and together we can brainstorm what might feel like a fit for you.

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Focus Collection for May: Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless by Debby Gorencic, Social Justice Committee

The May Focus Collection will benefit the Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless (NEOCH). Since 1988 NEOCH has sought to break the cycle of homelessness in Northeast Ohio. They exist to eliminate the root causes of homelessness while loving their diverse community. Their work includes organizing, advocacy, education and street outreach. Many of the unhoused people who have been helped by NEOCH have also been our guests at the Urban Hope Storefront.

NEOCH describes their vision as follows: "The work of the Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless is collective, and our coalition is a community formed by unhoused people, concerned community members, social justice groups, and homeless service providers, all of whom have been critical to the development of our mission and long-term vision. **We envision a society where everyone has a safe and stable place to call home where they can also embrace their own power and dignity.** We also recognize that this cannot be achieved without first acknowledging the root causes of homelessness: namely, structural racism and the lack of affordable housing. Thus, we find it imperative that our work be centered on anti-racism, radical love, education and collective grassroots organizing on issues of safe and affordable housing, along with tenants' rights advocacy."

The values of NEOCH, which are very similar to the values we embrace at SWUU, include Anti-Racism, Community, Compassion, Affirming Dignity, Radically Inclusive, Pro-LGBTQ, Justice and LOVE. Focus Collection donations can be made by check and placed in the collection basket or mailed to the church. They can also be made through the Vanco GivePlus website. Thank you for your support of the important work NEOCH provides.

Urban Hope Update by Jan Wehn, Social Justice Committee

Our April 17th visit to Urban Hope was eventful. Nancy and Denny Peltola and myself represented SWUU. Fortunately, we had 4 other volunteers. First of all, a huge thank you to the Youth who made delicious Vegetarian Vegetable Soup and homemade cookies to feed our guests. They ate with relish and also enjoyed grilled cheese, macaroni salad, hard boiled eggs, cheese sticks, candy, crackers and nuts. It was a difficult day for many of the guests. The Winter Shelters closed on Saturday, so many arrived with all of their belongings not knowing where they would spend the night. There was an edge in the air, and a few shouting matches ensued. Fortunately, we were able to settle people down, and the remainder of the afternoon was peaceful. Unfortunately, it began to pour at 4:30, and the Storefront closes at 5. We stayed open about 15 minutes longer until the rain slowed down. We left feeling downcast but relieved that people were leaving well fed and with a few take aways. Needless to say, we all were very appreciative that we had a warm, dry home waiting for us. Thank you all for your financial and food donations. Nothing goes to waste. Our next visit is Sunday, May 7 from 3-5.

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Board Happenings

by Mike Gold, Board President

It's May and the tulips, daffodils, hyacinth, and dogwoods are all blooming. Many of the magnolia trees have already dropped their blossoms just as the peonies and poppies and irises are starting to sprout.

Judging from the turnout at our recent Sunday services, our church is blooming as well with so many folks filling our sanctuary seats. And there's lots happening around the church as people start attending auction events, attend book and poetry and meditation and lunch and breakfast meetings, and prepare for the Common Read and Article II discussion sessions.

This past month featured the Connection Cafe, which provided an opportunity to learn about the great committees and groups here at SWUU. There are plenty of opportunities to get involved, so please consider volunteering to serve or be involved. All this adds to building fellowship. There were also a couple SWUU Classes that were well attended, which offered insight into the history and workings of the UUA and SWUU. And SWUU planned and hosted the first Youth Con for our region since Covid, which was attended by over 40 youth from Ohio, Indiana and Pennsylvania. Many thanks to all who made these all huge successes.

On the social justice front, SWUU was a site for the petition drive to get a pro-choice amendment on the November ballot. SWUU also provided the site for the local Democratic Club in their non-partisan effort to collect signatures for the amendment. Despite rain and cold weather, over 40 signatures were collected. SWUU continues to be involved in UU's Together, the Greater Cleveland Congregation, and Urban Hope.

The Board also approved an 8th Principle Resolution that you can read on the following page. It establishes our intent to actively pursue racial justice here at SWUU and in our community and support for a new committee that will help guide us in this effort, the Racial Justice Accountability Ministry (RJAM). In June, the congregation will be voting on establishing this new committee. See article on page 8.

Also up for a vote in June will be a Land Acknowledgment that the entire congregation can stand behind, one that recognizes the injustice done to the indigenous tribes that once inhabited the land our church sits on. Again, stay tuned for more information.

The Board continues reading and discussing Widening the Circle of Concern: Report of the UUA Commission on Institutional Change. We also support SWUU's two delegates to the UUA General Assembly, Rae Brewer and anastasia birosh, who are hosting three informational meetings on the revisions to Article II that are folding our 7 Principles (including the 8th Principle) into a set of Values with Love at its core. Those meetings are planned for May 5, 9, and 28. Please plan on attending. One of them.

The Board is currently in the process of establishing a budget for this coming year. Your pledges will be instrumental in letting us know what we have to work with in keeping SWUU the vital institution it is. We are also beginning to work on the Renewal of Fellowship for Reverend Ali, something both the Board and the Committee on Ministry are required by the UUA to submit by the end of June.

The Board is also considering how to create a safer and more secure environment at SWUU. Two things being considered are first aid training and floodlights and security camera at the front entrance. We have also established a relationship with the local police department, which conducted a safety and security checkup.

SAVE THE DATE's for June: Pride Day in Cleveland is June 3, from 11-6 in downtown Cleveland. Please contact Deb Celinski if interested in being part of the SWUU contingent participating in the march. Sunday, June 18, will be our Annual Meeting, when we need your attendance to vote on new Board members, the RJAM committee, and the Land Acknowledgement. There will also be an update on our finances from Treasurer Steve.

Finally, I want offer a few thanks. First, to Rev. Ali, Carolyn Stevens, Janet Williams, the Choir and Music Team for the outstanding services we have had this year. Thanks, too, to all the folks behind the scenes that make the services happen both in-person and online, and to Ken Ellis and Sylvia Banks for the beautiful photography they provide each week. And, finally, a standing ovation to Dan Paxson, who is our Building and Grounds Chair, and has been very busy this year maintaining our building, from furnace repair to steeple and roof and siding repair.

May all be well.

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SWUU 8th Principle Board Resolution

The Calling

To inform our adoption of this resolution, the Board of Trustees of SouthWest Unitarian Universalist Church (SWUU) acknowledges that:

- Our history as Unitarian Universalists includes *both*
 - Great commitment and individual achievement in the struggle for racial justice
 - The failure of our Unitarian Universalist institutions to respond fully to the call for justice.
- Racism and its far-reaching and continued societal effects (including, but not limited to, economic injustice, land theft, medical apartheid, housing and financial discrimination, unequal police enforcement and incarceration) are embedded in all our social institutions and in ourselves and will not be eradicated without deliberate analysis and action.
- Systemic racism impacts all people, and because oppressions are interconnected, we must make personal and institutional commitments to end all forms of racism.
- Global systems of white-dominated, anti-Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) racism, oppression, and capitalism have an unfair and inequitable effect on people.
- The members of Southwest Unitarian Universalist Church (SWUU) have approved the proposed 8th Principle “to affirm and promote journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.”

Due to this calling and our commitment as a living tradition, we resolve to put our faith into action to pursue this antiracist, anti-oppression, multicultural initiative in the spirit of justice, compassion, and community:

The Charge

With the congregation’s adoption of the 8th Principle, SWUU’s Board of Trustees covenant to:

- Challenge ourselves individually and collectively to reflect on and counter conscious and unconscious racism and internal bias as inhabitants of a racist society, and the effect racism has on all our lives regardless of color. This may include integrating an understanding of how we all must be liberated from white supremacy culture and embracing marginalized perspectives to make SWUU and its internal groups and organizations (i.e., boards, committees, task groups, nurture groups and councils) safer and more relevant for non-dominant groups. SWUU’s goal is accountability through acknowledgment, understanding, apology, reparations, reconciliation, and action.
- Enter into authentic dialogue and reparative relationships with BIPOC, within and outside of SWUU, with equity, shared power, mutual aid and defense and collaboration, that appropriately honors, affirms, restores, promotes, and supports the cultural traditions of all people of color.
- Educate ourselves continuously as a congregation via Sunday services, special programs, and support and engage with BIPOC art, multimedia, and events.
- Develop an ongoing process for the comprehensive institutionalization of the 8th Principle, understanding that whether or not we become more racially diverse, there is always the opportunity to become anti-racist and committed to racial justice. The Board supports the formation of the Racial Justice Accountability Ministry (RJAM) and its goal to audit the church’s programs, committees, structures, policies, practices, and history and identify systemic racism and white supremacy culture, habits, and practices within SWUU.
- Collaborate with local, national, and interfaith organizations to work for racial justice, equity, and well-being to become the diverse, multicultural Beloved Community envisioned in the 8th Principle.
- The Board will hold ourselves accountable by regularly reviewing our progress in this work and report to the congregation annually.

Adopted March 30, 2023 by unanimous consent of the SWUU Board of Trustees

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 on our website calendar.

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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Urban Hope Children's Garden Needs Volunteers

by Cathy Ross, Urban Hope

Urban Hope, a UU outreach on Cleveland's near west side, offers a gardening program to neighborhood children at Kentucky Community Garden. In spring and fall, we work with children from the Near West Intergenerational School. In the summer, the children are from the neighborhood.

Urban children who may not have much experience with nature have fun learning how their food is grown. We plant, water, weed, and harvest. Each session includes cooking with vegetables and a craft.

If you love gardening and children, the Urban Hope Children's Garden is a wonderful volunteer opportunity. The after school spring program runs from 3:15 to 4:30 pm starting in April on a day to be determined. The summer program runs from 4:00 to 6:00 pm on a weekday, also tbd. For more information or to sign up, please contact Cathy Ross at estrogen05@yahoo.com or 216-970-2854.



A Message from the Antiracism Task Force

by Susan Paxson

It's hard to believe it is already May! Have you started reading the book yet? The book is called Mistakes and Miracles, Congregations on the Road to Multiculturalism by Nancy Palmer Jones, and Karin Lin. The authors look at 5 different congregations and how they tried to work to be a more anti-racist, multicultural, beloved community. I am finding it extremely readable, because instead of a lot of general statements, and statistics about our UU churches, it is filled with stories about specific things that the 5 churches have tried, and how they worked out. I am reading the part about the UU Church of Annapolis. Although we are much smaller than they are, I can still see ideas that we could try in our own small church. The authors also describe conflicts that erupted, which is helpful, because we can be prepared for them, and hopefully deal with them in a positive way.

Even if you have not obtained the book yet, you can participate! I bought my copy for my Kindle for about \$10. If money is a barrier to anyone getting the book, I am sure something could be worked out. It is also available in audio form which you can get free if you have Amazon Prime. Please consider reading the book, and attending one of the church discussions. The first one is on **Sunday, May 21st** after church in person, and the second one will be on ZOOM on **Thursday, May 25th at 7:00 PM**. We hope to see you there as we dig in to what it means to become an Anti-racist Multicultural Beloved Community.

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ARTF Hopes to Become RJAM Committee with Congregational Vote

by Adrienne Ellis and anastasia birosh on behalf of the newly formed Racial Justice Accountability Ministry (RJAM)

The Antiracism Task Force (ARTF) was originally created in 2020 to do three things: 1) educate ourselves about the effects of white supremacy culture while examining our privilege, 2) educate the congregation, and finally, 3) prompt SWUU to adopt the 8th Principle.

The lifespan of any task force is limited to the length of time required to accomplish a specific task, which was done at our 2022 Annual meeting.

The task force members wishing to remain involved in racial justice aim to become a recognized committee. If adopted at our June Congregational meeting, the name of this new group will become the Racial Justice Accountability Ministry (RJAM) and added to the list of committees on page 115 of the SWUU Policy Manual.

The SWUU Policy Manual is on the SWUU website, www.swuu.org.

The Racial Justice Accountability Ministry's main goals will be to continue education about mutual liberation and to assist other committees and groups in the church to live into the promise of the 8th Principle fully.

Mark your calendar to attend the SWUU Congregational Meeting on Sunday, June 18th, at 11:45 am to make the dream a reality.

Evening Book Group Planning Session by Hallie Davis

This is a great time to consider joining the evening book group. New folks are welcome to weigh in on how the group will work. All those interested will meet on the SWUU Zoom (the same Zoom we use for church) on May 8th, at 7 pm. At this meeting we will decide on a book, where we will meet (at church, at someone's home, or on Zoom) and how often. Please contact Hallie Davis with questions at hallieswuu@gmail.com.

We have not met for a year or so and are looking forward to a good book and discussions with SWUU friends!

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Sharing and Caring

Please keep **Sue Wraight** in your thoughts and prayers as she works on her recovery.

Send your good wishes to **Kat Johnson**, as they are moving to be closer to family and their partner's new job. Although they have not been with us very long, they have been an integral part of our music program and our community. We will miss them.

Please keep **Sherry and Garry Spencer** in your thoughts and prayers as they had to say good bye to their kitty Clover, almost 20 years old.

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

**Southwest Unitarian Universalist Church
6320 Royalton Road
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We are happy to mail The Forum to anyone who would like to receive it.