



The Forum



A Southwest Unitarian Universalist Publication

www.swuu.org

April 1, 2025

Sunday Services

10:30 AM

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



April 6

Velemu Benventu: We Want to Welcome

Invitation and welcome is an ongoing process based on compassion, reflection, and intention. When and where does it start? When we go from "You can sit with us" to "We want you to sit with us" we begin to allow the spirit of humanity to reside not just near us, but within us.

-Led by Rev. Ian Anderson

Worship Associates: Ken Ellis

Focus Collection: U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants

April 13

Stronger Together

Generosity is the focus as we kick off our annual pledge drive. The Stewardship Committee will share readings that speak about giving, and we'll hear personal stories from members about the many ways in which SWUU is loved and valued.

-Led by the Stewardship Committee, Danelle Baker-Miller, Sharron Abbey-Gold, Steve Doucette, Lydia Avery

Worship Associate: Sarajane Willson

April 20

Fixing Our Narrative on Possibility

Hope is a spiritual discipline. The stories we tell and the paths that we build are more important than we know. We'll touch on the Easter Story through the story of the women at the tomb. To what realities are we open today?

-Led by Rev. Elaine Strawn, minister emerita UU Fellowship of Wayne County

Worship Associate: Deb Celinski

April 27

Disease of Injustice

We often think of disease as a medical or biological phenomenon that is separate from the social order, but as crises like the recent COVID pandemic have shown us, disease walks the paths of injustice and inequality that humanity has paved for it. Each year, over 1 million people die from the world's deadliest infectious disease, tuberculosis, despite the fact that it has been curable since the 1940s. What stories do we tell about disease and those suffering from illness, and how can we rewrite these narratives to envision a more just world?

-Led by Eli Butler

Worship Associate: Dan Paxson

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Message from your Minister

Welcome to the world, with so much love!

Vivian Grace Charity Peters

Born on March 16, 2025



The Forum

Focus Collection for April: U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants by Jan Wehn, Social Justice Committee

Thankfully, Don Bryant informed me about the USCRI and the good works they are doing for the Immigrant population. As of 1/24/25 the administration issued a "stop work order" preventing access to basic human needs-- rent, security deposits, food and utilities. The USCRI's mission statement is **to protect the rights and address the needs of persons in forced or voluntary migration worldwide and support their transition to a dignified life.** Many of our local neighbors are feeling the effects of loss with family members being deported or not being able to receive any benefits. Fortunately, Cleveland has a local office at 3167 Fulton Road. The director is Darren Hamm. Financial donations are needed to help families in distress. A check can be made out to SWUU clearly marked April Focus or money can be designated in your Vanco account. Thank you for supporting.

Urban Hope Update by Jan Wehn, Social Justice Committee

Wow...did we have a busy, great day at Urban Hope. Nancy and Denny Peltola, Ann and Mick Stenz and I were there along with 12 Creighton students participating in an Alternative Spring Break. They come twice a year, but we had not been notified. No matter, their energy was contagious, and they were busy with anything that was needed. We had a homemade chicken casserole, mashed potatoes and gravy, salad, corn souffle, fresh oranges, homemade cupcakes, crackers and granola bars. It was a feast. The sunshine put everyone in a joyous mood, and there was music and laughter. We all left feeling good. Our next visit is April 13. Thank you for all of your generous donations.

UU 101 and SWUU 101 by Susan Paxson, Membership Committee

We at SWUU are so pleased to see new faces coming through our doors and returning again and again! You are welcome here. Would you like to learn more about Unitarian Universalism and this church? Does SWUU feel like a place where you belong? Are you curious about getting more involved? Are you wondering about what it means to become a member? Two times a year, we usually offer a series of two classes for people who might be new to UU or new to our congregation.

We have had several people express an interest in finding out more about us, so we have scheduled our series of classes. Usually, our classes are facilitated by the minister, but since Rev Ali will be out on parental leave this spring, the Membership Committee will be leading them. UU 101, which will be on Sunday, May 4th immediately after the service, will focus on some of the history of Unitarian Universalism and how it is evolving. SWUU 101 will be on Sunday, June 1st at the same time, and will include more about our particular congregation. These classes are a requirement for membership, but they also give you a chance to find out more about us and think about whether or not you are ready to join. It is also a chance for us to find out more about you! The classes should last between an hour and an hour and a half. We promise they will end no later than 1:00! Please reach out to one of our committee members to let us know your if you would like to attend. We are Lydia Avery, Carol Jordan, Dodi Lettus, Susan Paxson, Sherry Spencer, and Kimberly Vincent.

The Forum

Save the Date Tuesday, May 13th

by Susan Paxson and Ellen Hansen-Ellis, GCC Facilitators

On **Tuesday, May 13th at 7:00** Greater Cleveland Congregations, GCC will be hosting an action at Lee Road Baptist Church, 3970 Lee Road, Cleveland 44128. Join GCC as we go public to share this important work of access to healthcare, age in place housing, and community connections in three neighborhoods (Lee Harvard, Lee Seville, and Lee Miles) Southwest UU always shows a great deal of support for usually try to carpool for people who would like.



CELEBRATE EARTH DAY

Save the Date for a Vegetarian/Vegan Potluck to Celebrate Earth Day!

Sunday, April 6
Immediately after church in the Fellowship Hall

Please bring your own table settings, a meatless/vegan dish to share, and a list of ingredients for your potluck item.

This is also a great time to share and swap your favorite vegetarian and vegan recipes!

After the meal, Carol Thombs will lead an educational session on how plant-based proteins benefit the environment.

Vegetarian/Vegan Potluck
Sunday, April 6, 2025

Service Auction Financial Results

by Steve Doucette, Treasurer

We already knew that the Service Auction was fun and high spirited. We have now tallied up all of the purchases, and we have great news! We raised slightly more than \$12,000, which is greater than last year's results and greater than any I have seen since joining the church 8 years ago.

Thank you to the Stewardship Committee and Friends and to the many volunteers who pitched in to plan and run the event. Thank you to Danelle Baker-Miller for her leadership as Chair of the Stewardship Committee. And thank you to the entire Congregation for your continuing financial support of our wonderful Church.



The Forum



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

Editorial Team

Dan Paxson
Susan Paxson

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.

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by Danelle Baker-Miller, Chair, Stewardship Committee

Friends,

The past year at SWUU has seen continued growth in attendance and enthusiasm. Now more than ever, SWUU provides much-needed solace, support and a place to find like-minded souls. As a community, we are *Stronger Together*.

SWUU's annual pledge drive will kick off on **Sunday, April 13**. As a fully self-funded church, we are responsible for all our expenses, and our pledge drive is our main source of income. Gifts from members and friends support our wonderful services and enable us to maintain our building and continue the many activities we all enjoy.

For many years, SWUU's expenses exceeded our income, requiring that we rely on our savings to pay some of our bills. In recent months, however, your generosity has enabled us to sustain a balanced budget. Our goal for the coming year is to continue this trend while offering a spiritual home for members and friends who may not be able to share their resources.

When you consider your pledge for the upcoming year, we ask that you remember the gifts you've received from SWUU and pledge accordingly. The Unitarian Universalist Association recommends pledging 3-5% of income. Please know we understand that not everyone is able to make a pledge of this size. Your participation, regardless of the amount, matters and contributes to SWUU's future.

Pledge materials including pledge cards will be distributed before and after the service on **April 13**. We will mail them to you if you do not attend this service. Stay tuned for further details.

If you have not pledged in the past and have questions, please feel free to contact me or reach out to Steve Doucette, Treasurer.

Though we are a small congregation, we are abundant in both spirit and community. Your support makes all that we enjoy possible. Please join us as we continue to make SWUU *Stronger Together*.

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“Getting to Know You”

Interview by Dodi Lettus

Steve LaBonne and **Janet Griffing-LaBonne** are two of our newest SWUU members. Both grew up on the East Coast—Janet in South Jersey and Steve in the lower Hudson Valley, although he was born in New York City.

Janet attended Ohio University, studying Journalism and working in the archives there while a student. She later worked for the Medina County District Library and for the Wadsworth Public Library in Public Relations. She also spent five years doing PR and marketing for the Akron Bar Association before retiring for good. Steve’s background is in Molecular Biology. Before he retired, he was a forensic DNA expert in Lake County, Ohio.

They married in 2012 and live in Medina. Steve has a daughter in Lakewood who works for Rockwell Automation, three sisters, and lots of cousins back East. His family background is primarily Irish and French-Canadian. He loves classical music and is a violinist in the Cleveland Philharmonic Orchestra. Janet has two sons—David, who died in September 2024, and her younger son, James. Her grandchildren are Molly, Jack, Emmalyn, and Audrey. Janet also has a brother who lives in Tennessee. Steve and Janet are passionate about their greyhounds, Chloe and Bianca, who are retired racers. They also have a cat named Martti.

Janet enjoys all sorts of fiber arts including weaving on a floor loom, knitting, and spinning. Janet was baptized in the ELCA Lutheran Church, was an Episcopalian, and unchurched for a while. Steve introduced her to the UU Church. Steve was Catholic until age 11. He has been a UU for 40 years and attended the Akron UU Church, as did Janet, before discovering SWUU.

Both quickly became active in SWUU, Steve as a member of RJAM, Janet on the Stewardship Committee. They both sing in the choir. Two of their favorite places they have traveled are Nice, France and Chicago.

An interesting twist of fate, Janet and Steve discovered that they had both attended the 1964 New York World’s Fair with their respective families, although they did not meet there. Who knows? Perhaps they passed each other in the crowds, unaware that they would someday join their lives together.



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Sharing and Caring

**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.