



The Forum



A Southwest Unitarian Universalist Publication

www.swuu.org

July 1, 2025

Sunday Services

10:30 AM

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



July 6

Freedom

We live in a country that proclaims "freedom" as one of its core values and our Unitarian Universalist faith is one that champions "freedom of belief." What does it truly mean to be free? On this Sunday following July 4, let us deepen how we understand freedom in our lives and in the world.

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

Worship Associate: Kirk Jusko

Focus Collection: Cuyahoga Valley National Park

July 13

Holding Hope in Community

What struggles are you facing in your life right now? Where might you find hope? All are welcome this Sunday to a prayerful service where we will hold hope for each other.

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

Worship Associate: Cynthia Mondia

July 20

Revolution Began with a Dream

Video sermon from 2025 General Assembly Sunday Service.

-Speaker: Rev. Dr. Kirk, Rev. Dr. J. Frank and Alice Schulman Chair of Unitarian Universalist History at Meadville Lombard Theological School.

Worship Associate: Deb Celinski

July 27

Question Box Sunday

Come this Sunday for a celebration of questions, during which our minister will do her best to respond to your submitted questions.

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

Worship Associate: Dan Paxson

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Message from your Minister

Dear Ones,

What a joy it has been to be back with you all after my parental leave! I missed you and I missed getting to be your minister during those few months.

And what a joy to get to share this wonderful congregation with my daughter, Vivian! I feel so grateful she will have such a loving community in these formative years of her life.

Yes, it is a joy to return and that joy comes also with a bit of trepidation. I have never been a parent before – let alone a working parent. It can feel intimidating to try to figure out how to give both my ministry and my family the attention they need and deserve. As I spend time making silly faces at my baby, singing to her, and just watching her grow, I hear the anxious warning voice in my head from the churning gears of culture around us reminding me about the to-do lists. “Be sure not to drop any balls,” I hear that warning voice say. Underneath is the unspoken message that I should run myself ragged in order to not let the new demands of parenthood affect my work life.

But the honest truth is that they do and they will.

And yet, there is a knowing in my soul that my ministry will be enriched and deepened in ways I can’t even imagine yet – not in spite of my new role as Vivi’s mother, but because of it. Sometimes culture puts a voice in our head that tells us that something is a liability, when, in reality, it can be a strength – something that orients us toward deeper truths.

What is that thing for you in this season of life? I pray you give it the attention it deserves and allow it to transform you in meaningful ways.

And I pray you are surrounded by people who give you grace and trust on that journey. For I am so grateful for the grace and trust offered so generously by you, beloveds.

With love and gratitude,
Rev. Ali

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Focus Collection for July: Cuyahoga Valley National Park by Jan Wehn, Social Justice Committee

Dear Friends,

Every July we request our Focus Offering to go to Cuyahoga Valley National Park. I looked over past articles where I talk about how lucky we are to have a National Park in our own backyard, the importance of their education programs for youths as well as adults, and add some new features that the park provides. By now most of you read the article in the June 17 Plain Dealer and saw the picture of the sign posted basically asking people to “tattle” if they see what they perceive as negative information on past or living Americans. As the article said, “Shades of Joe McCarthy” asking the public to “narc” on employees who they consider as promoting “Un-American” activities. It is obvious that the CVNP needs our support more than ever. Besides endorsing the positive education the park provides, we need to advocate for them. Hence, financial support will be crucial to help replace the federal funds that have been cut. Please think about sending a donation. It can be put in our collection or use the Vanco Account. The first Sunday of the month, all cash donations go directly to the Focus Offering. Thank you.

Urban Hope Update, June 1, 2025 by Jan Wehn, Social Justice Committee

It was a beautiful, sunny day and the weather reflected the moods of our guests. Mick Stenz, Nancy & Denny Peltola and I spent a lovely afternoon at the Storefront. We never stopped from 2:30 - 5:15. Denny definitely had dishpan hands! The line was long at 3 pm when people bolted through the doors. We had Fried Chicken, a delicious Macaroni and Beef Casserole, a HUGE tossed salad, oranges and grapes, and gourmet desserts. Plus, there were plenty of takeaways of snack packs, peanut butter crackers and chips. It's safe to say no one left hungry.

Yes, the mood was joyful. Music was playing LOUDLY which was annoying but we appreciated the jubilation...

Thank you for the generous donations. It helps us provide a positive atmosphere for people in need and the appreciation is palpable! Our next visit is back to the 2nd Sunday on July 13. Going to Urban Hope is rewarding. Join us sometime.

Donations for Rev. Ali's Installation Service by Adrienne Ellis, Board President

The Board was so grateful for all the "soft pledges" many of you shared at the June 15 congregational meeting for Ali's Installation Service in September. We hope you will put that pledge to action. You may have noticed a box for donations in the lobby. Please save the date and give if you can over the next few weeks (through July 13). We know it's going to be a special day. Thank you for your generosity!

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SWUU represents UU Values at BBH Pride Fest 2025

By Deb Celinski, Booth Coordinator

On Saturday, June 14, 2025, SouthWest UU Church sponsored a booth at the BBH Pride Fest, which took place at the Broadview Heights Community Center Campus. SWUU has been there for the past three years, every year since the festival's inception.

Although the day got off to a rainy start that delayed our set-up team, the weather finally cleared up enough to set up our tent and display the colorful rocks we offered for our rock painting activity, along with information about Unitarian Universalism and our congregation. As in the past, our booth was a hit, as kids – and some adults! – enjoyed decorating the rocks. Visitors to our booth painted well over 100 rocks!

We did more than just provide a fun kids' activity, though. SWUU's presence at this festival was a way for us to live our values. Our presence says that we honor the worth, dignity, and inherit divinity within each person. It is an important and vital message for our LGBTQAI+ siblings to hear. I know that I personally appreciate the support.

I want to thank everyone who volunteered at our booth:

- The set-up team of Mike Gold, Sharron Abbey, and Sarajane Willson, with an assist from Leslie VanKuren. Thank you for braving the lingering drizzle!
- Booth staffers of Lydia Avery, Kristen Campbell, Steve LaBonne, Janet Griffing LaBonne, Kathy Kinstler, and Jocelyn Harnest. Thank you for braving the mud!
- The tear-down team of Susan Paxson, Sherry Spencer, and Kirk Jusko. Thank you especially for cleaning up the chairs and tables when we got back to SWUU!



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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 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.

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

The Forum

Men's Group

by Ken Ellis

The Men's Group will meet at my home for a cookout Saturday, July 5, 6:30 pm. If the weather is unfavorable, we will meet at Aladdin's in Middleburg Heights.

For the cookout, plan to bring a side dish to share and something for yourself to grill and your choice of beverage. If you can, bring a lawn chair. I may not have enough seating if we have a large group. For those who are unfamiliar with the Men's Group, we gather for dinner and conversations. There is no agenda or topic of discussion. It is always full of great conversations and we know how to laugh! Let me know if you are interested and let's hope for good weather. For more information, text Ken.

Hello From Your New Board President!

by Adrienne Ellis

I am truly excited to serve you all as president of the board this year, alongside our VP, Sue Wraight, Rev. Ali, and other wonderful board members Jan Wehn, Steve Doucette, Katie Maslar, Eli Butler, and Steve LaBonne. I am always grateful for new experiences to hone my leadership skills and to learn from others, and based on the great past two years I've had on the board, I feel that I'm in good hands. There is something special about growing up in this congregation, having wonderful values modeled to me by you all, and having my identity fostered, then being invited and trusted to serve you all as an adult! I look forward to nurturing a growth and creativity mindset throughout the year, supporting the congregation's health, welcoming you all to share your talents, and continuing to find ways for us to spread love and hope in our communities.

And for those who don't know me well, I am a nonprofit grants director in Cleveland "professionally." Outside of work, I enjoy hiking, paddle boarding, crew (rowing), and spending time with my incredible partner, Pat, and my parents, Ellen and Ken. I also love cuddling my orange cat, Derby, and having vulnerable, beautiful conversations with great humans (many of whom are my SWUU family members!)

Looking forward to the year ahead, I invite you to contact me if you're curious about the board or leadership in general at SWUU. You can also talk to me about how you might get involved, or if you have other questions or suggestions. I hope you all enjoy your summer!

Peace, love, and rainbows,
Adrienne

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Summer Reading List with RJAM

by Adrienne Ellis

Are you a reader? Looking for a few good suggestions for the summer? Try checking out one (or more) of the suggestions below from the Racial Justice Accountability Ministry (RJAM) members, which reflect Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color perspectives:

- **The Water Dancer**, by Ta-Nehisi Coates - suggested by both Lydia Avery and Adrienne Ellis; a novel that will stay with you! Historical surrealist fiction set during the pre-Civil War south.
- **An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States**, by Roxane Dunbar-Ortiz - suggested by Steve LaBonne; probably the best known survey, winner of the American Book Award.
- **The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store**, by James McBride - suggested by Adrienne Ellis; novel about a Black and Jewish community in a poor town in Pennsylvania in the 1920s and 30s with a wild plot!
- **The Rediscovery of America: Native Peoples and the Unmaking of U.S. History**, by Ned Blackhawk - suggested by Steve LaBonne; a more scholarly work by a distinguished historian at Yale. This book stresses the active role Indigenous people were able to play in their own history right up to the post - Civil War period, and the struggle to reclaim their agency in the 20th Century.
- **Black Cake and Good Dirt**, both by Charmaine Wilkerson - suggested by Lydia Avery; both novels; Good Dirt is new this year!
- **The Warmth of Other Suns**, by Isabel Wilkerson - suggested by Adrienne; about the Great Migration of Black southern Americans to northern cities in the first few decades of the 1900s.
- **James**, by Percival Everett - suggested by Lydia Avery; a re-imagining of Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.
- **Cahokia Jazz**, by Francis Spufford - suggested by Steve LaBonne; an alternate history / detective novel (similar concept to Michael Chabon's The Yiddish Policemen's Union) in which a far larger Indigenous population has survived into the early 20th Century and Indigenous people have perilously vulnerable control of the state of Cahokia, containing a great city of that name at the famous Mound Builders site in what in our world is southwestern Illinois.
- **Parable of the Sower**, by Octavia Butler - suggested by Adrienne Ellis (and noted in her Empathy sermon in May!) Sci-fi, future/dystopian novel.
- **The Black Box: Writing the Race**, by Henry Lewis Gates, Jr. - suggested by Lydia Avery; the story of Black self-definition in America through the prism of the writers who have led the way.

Thanks, and HAPPY READING!

Birthdays!!

by Carol Jordan, Nifty Nineties

It is Birthday Party time again. If you are having a birthday this year, please join SWUU members and friends for the fourth annual Birthday Party. It will be Wednesday, July 23, at noon at Kumo Japanese Seafood Buffet, 1975 Snow Rd., (just west of Broadview Road). Please bring a signed (but not addressed) birthday card. In return, you will receive a card from a SWUU friend. The exclusive Nifty Nineties -- Jan Futhey, Jim Moore, Sylvia Banks and Carol Jordan -- now welcome a new member, Carolyn Baldwin. If there are others who are eligible for this fine-aging group, please let us know. We hope everyone will join us in celebrating the joys of marking another year of being a part of this wonderful world.

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The Hospitality Committee invites you to the

Blueberry Sundae Fest

Sunday, July 27

Following the service in fellowship hall

**Featuring: vanilla ice cream,
homemade blueberry topping
& crumbled shortbread cookies.**

(cookies are nut-free, and gluten-free, dairy-free options will be available upon request.)



A sign up sheet will be on the table outside the sanctuary.

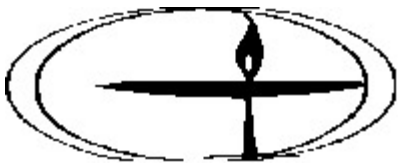
The cost is \$7 per person, max \$20 per family

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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.