



The Forum



A Southwest Unitarian Universalist Publication

www.swuu.org

September 1, 2025

Sunday Services

10:30 AM

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



September 7

Belonging vs. Fitting In

How do we practice building belonging as a community? Come this Sunday as we explore what it means to belong and how belonging is different from fitting in. This service will include a backpack blessing! **Whatever your age, we invite you to bring your backpack or briefcase or any bag you pack to prepare for the learnings and labors of each day so that your bag may be blessed by our community as you embark upon the coming year.**

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

Worship Associate: Ken Ellis

Focus Collection: Minister's Discretionary Fund

September 14

Ingathering Water Communion

In mid-September, we hold our annual "ingathering" service, when we re-gather after the summer may have taken some of us in different directions. We mark this ingathering with our annual water celebration ritual. **On this Sunday, you are invited to bring some water from a place that is significant to you (whether that be your kitchen sink or a far off stream).** Come as we join our waters together in community.

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

Worship Associate: Cynthia Mondia

Saturday, September 20 @ 2pm

The Installation of Rev. Ali Peters

Join us for a celebration of covenant, community, and shared ministry as we formally install Rev. Ali as our settled minister.

September 21

Blessing Blender

Come this Sunday for a ritual of giving and receiving blessings in community. May this service bring you a blessing your heart needs to hear.

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

Worship Associate: Dan Paxson

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September 28

Healing from the Generational Traumas of American Indian Boarding Schools

Many Indigenous peoples are still grappling with the aftereffects of centuries of systemic oppression. Nancy Kelsey shares her story of growing up in Cleveland in a multicultural household and neighborhood, the effects of boarding school, and how her journey as a Native American storyteller makes a difference.

-Led by Nancy Kelsey, Social Media Manager Nia Tero, Board member Lake Erie Native American Council

Worship Associates: Mike Gold & Kirk Jusko

Message from your Minister

Belonging

Dear Ones,

I like to get to the church early on Sunday mornings. I use the time to get settled and make sure things are ready for when y'all arrive for worship. There is a beautiful sunlit quiet in the sanctuary during that time, as I imagine the room soon filled with your friendly beloved faces. It's a peaceful way to begin the morning.

This past Sunday, when I arrived, I noticed a new addition to our altar. As you probably know, our table next to the pulpit in the front of our sanctuary serves as our altar as it holds symbols of the holy. It holds our bowl of communal water that receives our joys and our sorrows, a symbol of caring for each other and for the world. It often holds flowers, a symbol of beauty, diversity, and the natural world. And it holds our flaming chalice, a shared symbol of the light of truth and the warmth of love, in a nourishing cup that is for everyone.

But this past Sunday someone had left a new symbol that hadn't been there before. On our altar, next to our chalice, was a small toy truck. I immediately recognized this truck as belonging to one of our congregation's kiddos. And it made me smile. Here before me was another symbol of the holy – a symbol of the presence of children among us in our beloved sanctuary. A small, sweet reminder of how they are a part of our community, how they enrich our community, and how they belong among us. A symbol also, I hope, of our kids feeling comfortable in our worship space. Feeling like it is a space where they belong and feel a part of something. If that is so, then we are doing something right.

Our worship theme for the month of September is "Belonging." As I reflect on this theme, I am left thinking about that little toy truck and the reminder that it gave me that morning.

What holy symbols of belonging can you find around you, beloveds? May we all find and notice these reminders that all of us belong in beloved community. You belong here.

With love and gratitude,
Rev. Ali



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Focus Offering for September: Minister's Discretionary Fund

by Nancy Peltola, Social Justice Committee

During the month of September, we will collect monetary offerings to benefit the Minister's Discretionary Fund. This fund is used by Rev. Ali to assist our own members and friends of SWUU to meet their basic living needs such as buying food, paying a utility or medical bill, or helping to pay for transportation.

In addition, the fund may be used to provide financial assistance with church-related expenses such as paying for an event registration or fees for someone to represent our church. A private appointment may be made directly with Rev. Ali to confidentially discuss a special monetary need.

Donations may be made by check at a church service or by mail to SWUU, 6320 Royalton Rd., North Royalton, OH 44133. Please write Focus Offering on the memo line. Or you may use the Vanco GivePlus app and just check Focus Offering. As always, thank you for your generosity.



Birthday Open House!

By Deb Celinski

I'm hosting a birthday open house on October 4 to celebrate my 60th birthday and my 20th year as a cancer survivor with all my family and friends! It will be held at the church, from 2:00-7:00 pm. For more details (and to RSVP if you wish to drop by) see this link: <https://forms.gle/2Ka8E2vHzc4NSRUi9>



SAVE THE DATE!

On Sunday, October 5 after the church service, we will be hosting our second **Connection Cafe**, where all are invited to learn about the many congregant-led committees and ministries SWUU has to offer!

Committee leaders have been contacted to identify a representative for their group, and we are inviting any of you to consider bringing finger foods/small bites so the event can also have a mini potluck feel.

Please contact Adrienne Ellis with questions or suggestions (ellisa3214@gmail.com). We hope you will plan to attend!

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Our New Land Acknowledgment

by Mike Gold and Kirk Jusko, Worship Team

We are happy to announce that we have an updated Land Acknowledgment. Kirk Jusko and I presented it to the Racial Justice Accountability Ministry team (RJAM) at their August meeting and it was approved. The reason for the update is to make our land acknowledgment an action statement and one that is personal to our church. The wording is very close to that supported by two Native American contacts, Pastor Cindi Byron-Dixon, who was a guest speaker at SWUU in March, and Ronda Lehnortt, Executive Director at Three Sisters Intertribal Organization. We are grateful to anastasia birosh, who initiated our original land acknowledgment.

Below is the wording that was decided upon at the RJAM meeting.

SouthWest Unitarian Universalist Church acknowledges with respect the various indigenous peoples on whose ancestral lands we worship. For millennia, Native Americans occupied, cared for, and had a deep spiritual relationship with the land and waterways in Ohio, a name that derives from the Iroquois language meaning "great river." Today, Native Americans of diverse ancestries and tribal affiliations continue to reside in Northeast Ohio despite ethnic cleansing, forcible removal, unrecognized sovereignty, and race-based discrimination.

We are committed to cultivating meaningful relationships with indigenous communities in our region and supporting their efforts to preserve their culture and fight racism. We make this pledge as a welcoming church community not only through this statement, but in action and practice as well. We pledge to financially support Native American causes at least once per year, invite indigenous speakers, and promote Native American history, issues, and events.

To follow through on the commitment to make our land acknowledgment an action statement, SWUU's October focus collection will be in support of the annual Pow Wow sponsored by Three Sisters, which takes place October 4 & 5 at the Atwood Lake Fall Festival in Mineral City, OH, just south of Canton. Flyers for the event will be posted at the church. We are grateful to Jan Wehn and Nancy Peltola, of the Social Justice committee, for their support.

In addition, our guest speaker on Sunday, September 28, will be Nancy Kelsey, a Native American storyteller and former Assistant Communications Director for Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson. Three Sisters has offered to provide a guest speaker for a future date.

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Join us for fall-themed FUN including
crafts, food, music, a costume contest, raffles
and time to connect with SWUU friends!



Saturday, October 18th
1:00-4:00pm

At North Park
3595 Grafton Rd, in Brunswick

In case of rain, we will hold the event at SWUU.

All are Welcome! Hope to see you there!

Please contact Lois Veraguth at loisveraguth@hotmail.com or
440-390-8063 if you would like to contribute items to the Fall Fest raffle!

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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.

Do you need to contact someone on the SWUU Staff?

Rev. Ali Peters (Minister)	(440) 305-0631
Rae Brewer (President)	
Carolyn Stevens (Church Administrator)	(440) 877-1686
Carolyn Stevens (Director of Religious Exploration)	

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

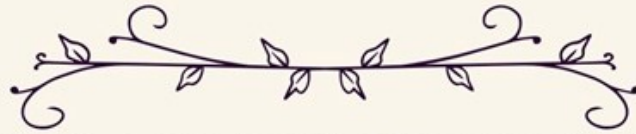
If you would like to receive the Board Minutes via email, contact office@swuu.org, and put "Board Minutes" in the subject line

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The Forum



YOU ARE JOYFULLY INVITED
to the Installation of
Rev. Ali Peters
as minister of
Southwest Unitarian
Universalist Church

2 p.m.
September 20th, 2025

6320 Royalton Rd.
North Royalton, OH
44133

Join us for a celebration of covenant,
community and shared ministry as we formally
install Rev. Ali as our settled minister.



A reception with light refreshments will follow.
All are welcome!

Please RSVP by September 10th

<https://tinyurl.com/revalipeters>

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Welcoming Congregation Renewal by Dodi Lettus, Membership Committee

As we announced in the March 2025 Forum, the SWUU Board and the Membership Committee have committed to renewing our commitment as a Welcoming Congregation to honor our pledge, first made in 1997, to welcome people of all sexual orientations and gender identities to SWUU.

In 2015 the UUA revamped this process to require a yearly renewal documenting measurable achievements in the areas of education, congregational life, and outreach to the LGBTQ/TGQNB community.

The program requirements for recognition as a Welcoming Congregation can be found here: <https://www.uua.org/lgbtq/welcoming/program/how-to-run> and the Five Practices of Welcome Renewal can be found here: <https://www.uua.org/lgbtq/welcoming/program/guidelines>

This may look daunting, but what it boils down to are many things we have been doing for a long time:

- Two Welcoming Worship Services in our liturgical schedule that uplift the themes of LGBTQ/TGQNB welcome and inclusion.
- Include 6 Welcome Days of Observance on our calendar throughout the year—this is as simple as featuring a prayer, story for all ages, chalice lighting/extinguishing, song, or art form that honors the occasion of an event such as LGBTQ+ Pride Month or National Coming Out Day.
- Sponsor 1 webinar/seminar, movie or book discussion throughout the year that raises awareness about the issues and needs of the LGBTQ/TGQNB community.
- Support a Welcoming Project such as donating financially to a local or national organization that supports the LGBTQ+/TGQNB community.
- Apply to be a Welcoming Congregation through the UUA (requires a congregational vote and documentation through the UUA's application process).

The best way to achieve this is to form a work group composed of members from the following committees/groups: LGBTQ+ Support Group, Social Action, Worship Associates, Religious Exploration, Membership, Care Team and the SWUU Board.

Next steps: Please discuss this at your next group or committee meeting. If you would like someone to come to your meeting to present this to the group, please let Susan Paxson know and one of the Membership committee people will attend. We would like to get the work group established as soon as possible.

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History of Our Beloved Garden (continued) by Sherry Spencer

Last month, I described the evolution of our garden. Here are David's own words about it from 2013:

Q: What kind of garden is it?

DS: It's not a flower garden or a perennial garden. The purpose of this art form is much like that of landscape painting: to evoke the beauty of nature and the feelings it inspires. Rather than paint with a brush on paper or canvas, I compose a landscape on the site by shaping the land and responding to the forms of natural materials—rocks, plants, soil, water—as if they occurred there naturally. The rocks should feel like a natural geological formation exposed by weathering—even in a small space next to a busy road. The



trees and small plants ought to look like they grew there in accord with natural processes. As in nature, the compositional balance is asymmetrical. All of these qualities together impart a feeling of tranquility and a sense of oneness with the natural world. The main feature of the site that suggested the garden was the grass-covered south-facing slope that rolled down to the sidewalk. I tucked rocks into the 3-foot-high slope, creating a cliff formation that divided the space into an upper and lower garden, with sedums as ground cover.

Q: Where did this art form develop? And how did you study it?

DS: It developed in China and Japan, out of nature-based arts like landscape painting and earth-based philosophies such as Taoism, Buddhism, and Shinto, through which humans see themselves as part of the natural world, not dominant over it. I learned the art through serving a two-year apprenticeship under a master, Kinsaku Nakane, in Kyoto, Japan in 1971-72, and studying East Asian language and culture.

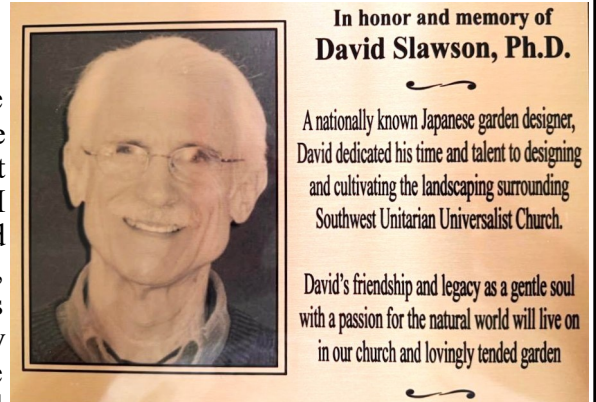
Q: What was the impetus for making the garden?



DS: A generous donation for the garden was given in memory of Sherry Spencer's father, Jim Banyard, by the Banyard/Spencer families. It was to be "A Memorial Garden to beautify the front yard, honor our connection to the Earth and nature, and be a place of reflection." The money was used to pay a contractor to set the boulders, and for the plants and plaques. All the rest of the work was done by volunteers under my direction.

For more information about this art form, see:

http://www.cleveland.com/insideout/index.ssf/2013/02/seven_hills_japanese_garden_de.html



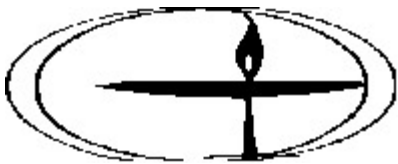
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Sharing and Caring

Carol Jagers shares that she is looking forward to seeing the doctor on September 2nd and is hoping to get approved to begin weight bearing physical therapy.

**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.