



The Forum



A Southwest Unitarian Universalist Publication

www.swuu.org

December 1, 2025

Sunday Services

10:30 AM

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



December 7

Passionate Hope Builders Needed. Apply Within

It is the season of arriving, of hoping for the “what has not yet arrived”. It is a crucial skill in our current world. As with all skill sets, it takes training and mentoring and a huge amount of heart. It is hope that lights our chalice this morning.

-Led by Rev. Elaine Strawn

Worship Associate: Eli Butler

Focus Collection: Unitarian Universalist Service Committee Guest at Your Table

December 14

Blue Holiday

For some of us the holiday hubbub may bring along complicated feelings that are not always joyful. Join us this Sunday for a contemplative space to honor our feelings and experiences at this time of year. No expectations, just comfort and connection.

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

Worship Associates: Cynthia Mondia and Dan Paxson

December 21

Pageant

Come this Sunday to honor the Winter Solstice with our all-ages pageant!

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

Worship Associate: Ken Ellis

December 24

Christmas Eve

5:30 PM

Join us for a Christmas Eve service of stories, carols, and candlelight.

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

December 28

Symbols of Hope

A celebration of the core symbols of the winter religious holidays and how they deepen our experience of hope.

-Written by Rev. Darcy Laine, delivered by Deb Celinski

Worship Associate: Ken Ellis

The Forum

Message from your Minister

Hope

Dear Ones,

On a few different occasions recently, someone at church has asked me “What is December’s worship theme?” And when I have provided the answer, “Hope,” that person has reacted with a big exhale, saying something like “Oh boy, we need some of that these days, don’t we?”

Yes, we do. And the good news is that hope is here for us.

In fact, hope is an inherent part of our Unitarian Universalist faith. UU theologian, James Luther Adams, laid this out for us when he wrote about what he called the “Five Smooth Stones of Religious Liberalism.” These were the five things needed to carry a liberal faith forward. When speaking about these “smooth stones,” he spoke of possibility, respect, justice, agency, and last but not least, hope. He said:

[L]iberalism holds that the resources (divine and human) that are available for the achievement of meaningful change justify an attitude of ultimate optimism. Hope.

And Luther Adams was not writing this from a perspective of sheltered naïvete. He had lived through World War II and his theology was shaped by seeing the horrors of fascism and Nazism up close.

And still, he lifts up hope as core to his faith— both his own faith and our collective faith.

Our faith declares that we have the resources for meaningful change.

This point from James Luther Adams has always reminded me of one of my favorite quotes about hope – this one coming from my mom, Rev. Barbara Peters. This came from a sermon where, unlike Luther Adams, she made a distinction between optimism and hope:

My vote is on the side of hope which wins over optimism every time. You see, there is a difference between optimism and hope. Optimism hangs on to whatever can be gleaned from a situation as good. Hope, on the other hand, focuses on a different direction. Hope focuses on the power of God’s love to see us through and transform us. Optimism can waiver, hope never fails. Optimism may help for the short-term, hope is what we need for the long haul.

Whether or not you, yourself, believe in God, the message here is powerful. Hope lies in the power of Love to see us through and transform us. We have the resources for meaningful change.

May we know this hope, beloveds.

With love and gratitude,
Rev. Ali

The Forum

Focus Offering for December: UUSC Guest at Your Table

by Jan Wehn, Social Justice Committee

Every December we support UUSC by donating to Guest at Your Table. The 2025-2026 theme is **Plant Seeds of Justice**. Change is difficult but not impossible with Human Rights and International aid being cut. This year grassroots leaders are planting seeds for a more just future. The following issues will be addressed:

- Innovative migration justice leaders housing LGBTQIA and asylum seekers in Philadelphia
- A Honduran community of water defenders carrying on the legacy of the late Juan Lopez
- Political Prisoner Ruth Lopez fighting for government accountability and human rights in El Salvador
- Haitian Activists fighting for the rights of people in migration.

Donations to Guest at Your Table help advance community led rights around the world. Any unrestricted donation of \$150 or more is eligible to be matched by the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock in NY.

It is probably easier to make a direct contribution to UUSC. Look up uusc.org/givetoguest. Checks can be sent to UUSC * PO Box 808 * Newark, NJ 07101-0808. Please write GAYT in the memo. But, of course, checks can be put in our collection during service or by using Vanco. Thank you for supporting the International Community.

Urban Hope Update: November 9th by Jan Wehn, Social Justice Committee

Urban Hope Sunday was a chilly, rainy day. Nancy, Denny, CJ and I worked non stop from 2:45 to 3:20. The Storefront was packed by 3:15. We had a huge Chicken, Rice, Meatball, Vegetable Casserole; two very Big Salads; Rolls; Oranges, Grapes and Bananas; Delicious Gourmet desserts, Candy and MANY takeaways. We also passed out all of the T Shirts, Socks and Underwear. Our Food was gone by 4, but fortunately there was some bread and peanut butter to make sandwiches. Our guests were happy to be dry and warm and thoroughly enjoyed the meal. People were in very good spirits and especially appreciative. We were very needed, and it felt great to assist our Cleveland neighbors. It is a worthwhile way to spend an afternoon. Thank you for the generous food and financial donations. Our next visit is Sunday, December 14. We have enough "take aways" but would like to collect Warm Gloves, Hats and Socks to pass out for Christmas. Thank you!

Cookies after the Christmas Eve Service! by Candy Poissant, Hospitality Committee

Cookies will be welcome at the Christmas Eve service. If you bring some, please be sure they are in a serving dish of yours to take home any leftovers and clean up as necessary. The cookies should be placed on the table outside the Sanctuary. Leftover cookies should be refrigerated or frozen downstairs or taken home. Please help the hospitality committee by bringing up a few napkins from downstairs.

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 23rd of the month unless otherwise noted.

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

Tree Trimming and Cooky Baking at SWUU **Saturday, December 13th 1:00 pm** by Susan Paxson, Membership Committee

Friends, the holiday season is here! In the past, Ken and I have chosen a date for putting up our Christmas Tree and having cooky baking downstairs. It is always a fun time to be together and people do not need to commit to coming at a certain time. This year, we will meet at the church on Saturday, December 13th at 1:00pm, and we are usually heading home by 3:30 or so.

Ken will be putting up the tree, so people are welcome to help him with that. If you like to bake (and eat) cookies, we have a group baking project, downstairs in the fellowship hall. Everyone who participates is asked to bring some cooky dough to make into cookies, and then we work together to make and or decorate the different ones. After we finish, we share the batches so everyone can have a variety to take home. Sometimes we also leave some at church for Christmas Eve. And the best part is that the mess stays out of your kitchen!! We all help clean up before going home!

Please contact Susan with questions! We hope to see you there.

SWUU Member Anniversaries! by Carol Jordan

Five members of our community will mark 35 years of membership in December. Joining SWUU on Dec. 16, 1990, were **Lydia Avery, Sue Davis, Carol Jagggers, Susan Paxson and Dan Paxson**. All of them have been active members, serving in leadership positions and enriching our congregation.

Save the Date **for the 2026 Service Auction!** **Saturday, February 28, 2026** **Starting at 4:00 pm**



Join us for an evening of fun, food and friends **Featuring the annual service auction, raffle and potluck**

The Service Auction is our biggest fundraiser of the year. You can expect fun activities for the whole family, including kids! If you have attended the auction before, please spread the word and help new people understand how it works.

- We will be collecting donations for the auction. If you've received a gift that isn't quite right for you or have other gently used items you'd like to contribute, please reach out to Lois Veraguth to discuss details.
- The SWUUber ride service will be back for those who need transportation to the event!



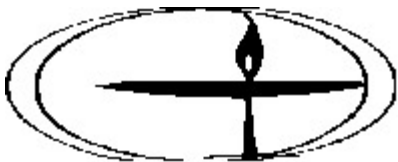
Stay tuned for more details soon to come!

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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.