

The Forum

A Southwest Unitarian Universalist Publication

www.swuu.org

February 1, 2026



Sunday Services

10:30 AM

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



February 1

The Resilience of Remaining Tender

Often when we think of something that is resilient, we picture something hard and impenetrable. How might this idea be holding us back from true resilience?

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

Worship Associate: Ken Ellis & Valerie Hura

Focus Collection: Journey Center For Safety and Healing

February 8

Holding Each Other Up

How do we make each other resilient?

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

Worship Associates: Eli Butler & Janet Griffing-LaBonne

February 15

Change is the Only Constant

Change is hard. And yet life has forced us to reckon with the fact that change is unavoidable.

How can we move through changes and transitions together with resilience?

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

Worship Associate: Sarajane Willson

February 22

Showing Up for Racial Justice

Join the members of SWUU's Racial Justice Accountability Ministry (RJAM) to explore the idea of sumud, a powerful Arabic word for steadfastness, in relation to antiracism work and through stories.

-Led by The Racial Justice Accountability Ministry (RJAM)

Worship Associate: Kirk Jusko

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Message from your Minister

Resilience

Beloveds,

Right now, I'd like to offer you a prayer. This is one that has been on my heart during this moment in our country that carries so much sorrow and anger. This is a prayer written by Rev. M. Jade Keiser.

*Gentle Presence,
Patient Listener,
Holy Holder of it all,
My prayer is this:
I am so sad.*

*It's not an ask.
It's not a confession.*

*It's an offering.
The only one I have today.*

*I'm praying it with hope.
I know grief is a lifeline -
tethering me to the world that should be.
The one worth fighting for.*

*As a practice of faith,
I will not deaden these feelings
that let me know all is not well.
I will not adjust to cruelty or disregard for life,
detaching myself from humanity - mine or others.*

*I will not allow once unimaginable scenarios
to be turned into everyday losses
that no longer pierce my soul.*

*And so here are my tears,
And here is my tired body,
And here is my foggy, distracted mind
bearing witness to the place within
that aches for the ones I love,
for friends and strangers,
for everyone being pushed into impossible situations.*

*My sadness is a testimony.
It is not my only one.*

*Tomorrow, hope or fight or curiosity
will bear their truth,
and pull me back into the labors I love,
in the company of others.*

*But today the only riot in me is this sorrow,
refusing to quiet your cry from within:
'We are made for so much better than this.'"*

Our worship theme this month is "Resilience." How do you feel resilience living in this prayer?

May it be so, beloveds. And Amen.

With love and gratitude,
Rev. Ali

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Focus Offering for February: Journey Center For Safety and Healing

by Jan Wehn, Social Justice Committee

Every February for the past 11 years we send our love (and money) to The Journey Center formerly known as the Domestic Violence Center (<https://www.journeyneo.org>). I have had the privilege of visiting the Center and learning first hand about the good work they do. Each year I focus on one of their programs, and this year we will take a closer look at the Centers Shelter: Youth Program. Some facts as follows:

- The emergency shelter offers a warm, homelike atmosphere where approximately 50% of clients are children with a parent.
- Programs are designed to facilitate empowerment by giving youth opportunity to understand their strengths and process their experiences.
- Art expression and play is used for healing.
- Outings, events, family movie nights, homework help and tutoring are provided.
- Youth advocates volunteer in the shelter to help with the programs.

Giving to the Journey Center enables this program to exist. Please think about donating and putting in a check or cash designated for February Focus in the collection basket or by giving through your Vanco Account.

Thank you for your generosity.

Urban Hope Update: January 11, 2026

by Jan Wehn, Social Justice Committee

Wow...talk about a perfect day with our Cleveland neighbors! Nancy & Denny Peltola, CJ Warren, Mick Stentz and I spent a loving, warm afternoon on a chilly day at the Storefront. It was particularly meaningful knowing we could provide care in these times where so many around our country are suffering. We served a Chicken Rice Casserole, an abundance of salad, grapes, bananas, gourmet desserts, and plenty of take-aways. We were out of food by 4:30, but had peanut butter and jelly for latecomers. Thank you for the cash and food donations. We have a reputation to uphold serving the best meals on SWUU Sundays! The next UH date is Sunday, February 8.

SWUU 1st Wednesday Breakfast

by Hallie Davis

The SWUU 1st Wednesday Breakfast will now meet at Royal Breakfast & More 500 East Royalton Road in Broadview Hts.

Please consider attending our next breakfast on Wednesday, February 4th at 9:30 am. RSVP to the email that is sent to the SWUU list or to me.

The SWUU breakfast is a time to learn more about our beloved community. Looking forward to seeing you there!

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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 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



by Danelle Baker-Miller

SWUU's Annual Service Auction

Saturday, February 28, 2026

In-Person Event Starts at 4:00 pm



Some important dates:

- **Monday, January 26:** SWUU members and friends can enter their offerings on our auction website. You will receive directions via SWUUlist and SWUU News.
- **Saturday, February 28 at 4:00 pm:** In-person auction. Those unable to attend may appoint a proxy.
- **Monday, March 2:** Auction opens virtually for one week. At this time, you can sign up for unclaimed services.
- **Monday, March 9:** Online Auction closes.

During the event, we will be hosting a raffle with baskets and other fun items. If you have gently used items you'd like to contribute, please reach out to Lois Veraguth to discuss details. Lois would like to receive raffle items by **February 8**.

Why donate and participate?

The Service Auction is our biggest fundraiser event of the year. It's a wonderful way to make new friends and strengthen current relationships. You can expect a great potluck

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dinner, and fun activities for the whole family including kids! PLEASE, if you have attended the auction in the past, spread the word and help new people understand how it works. Not only will this be fun, it's also a critical fundraiser for our congregation. Watch for further details coming soon via SWUUList and other channels.

How it works

SWUU raises money while providing social opportunities. Members and friends decide on an event they would like to organize and host, or a service they can provide. These events include hikes, dinners, game nights, backyard BBQs, concerts or singalongs at your home or at church, computer service, movie nights, airport deliveries, cleaning, baked goods, repairs, haircuts, teaching a skill, artwork or framed photos created by the donor. At the auction, people sign up for or bid on these services/items. All money raised goes to the church. No cash changes hands at the auction itself. Once the auction is over, you receive an invoice for your purchases.

What you can do right now

Before the website even opens, you can think about what you might offer as a service or item.

If you are new to our church

Please feel free to contact any of the following volunteers who are working on this event to learn how the service auction works. As an added benefit, you might get to know someone better. Here's who you might call or e-mail:

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**Need a ride to the service auction on February 28?
Willing to give others a ride to the service auction?**

Consider the SWUUber ride service!



We know that driving to evening events poses challenges for some of our members and friends. SWUUber can help you get to the auction, support the church and have some fun!

Please contact **Deb Celinski, SWUUber Reservation Agent**, to place your request for a ride or to offer rides to others.

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AUCTION POTLUCK UPDATE Saturday, February 28, 2026

Due to popular appeal, we're bringing the bowl potluck back for the 2026 auction! If you've eaten at Chipotle or Panera Bread, you're familiar with the concept. It's a bowl filled with a combination of distinct, diverse and different ingredients. Our version, however, is a little different...you get to create it yourself. When you build your own bowl, you choose from a variety of grains, greens, protein and toppings to make your own unique creation.



This is a BYOB event: Bring Your Own Bowl!

We'll have silverware and some bowls available at the dinner, but we encourage you to bring your own bowl. Additionally, the Hospitality Committee will provide beverages and some garnishes and condiments.

Outside the sanctuary, there will be lists to sign up for the ingredients you would like to bring. At the auction event itself, you'll have the opportunity to make a \$10 donation (\$20 max for families) to help support our event. The Hospitality Committee would also appreciate your support in setting up and cleaning up after this event! Please consider signing up to help! 😊

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HAPPY
Valentine's Day

Join us for After Hours RE
February 13, 2026
from 5-8 pm

All age children are
welcome! Join us for
dinner, friendship, and fun!

RSVP to Carolyn at office@swuu.org
If you want to volunteer please reach
out. We are also looking for
donations of small items for
valentines bags.

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Let's Podcast Together! Congregational Antiracism Engagement

by Susan Paxson, RJAM

The Racial Justice Accountability Ministry (RJAM) has been busy the last several months. In order to engage the community in the past, we have shown a couple of movies and had great discussions afterwards. This year, we are trying something new- a podcast series! The great part about a podcast is that people can listen at whatever time is convenient for them. You can listen while you are commuting to work, riding the exercise bike, or doing mundane jobs around the house or yard.

The name of the podcast is *Scene On Radio*, produced by John Biewen, a longtime journalist and producer now based at the Kenan Institute for Ethics at Duke University. *Seeing White* is their second season:

“Just what is going on with white people? Police shootings of unarmed African Americans. Acts of domestic terrorism by white supremacists. The renewed embrace of raw, undisguised white-identity politics. Unending racial inequity in schools, housing, criminal justice, and hiring. Some of this feels new, but in truth it’s an old story. Why? Where did the notion of “whiteness” come from? What does it mean? What is whiteness for? Scene on Radio host and producer John Biewen took a deep dive into these questions, along with an array of leading scholars and regular guest Dr. Chenjerai Kumanyika.”

We will **lead two discussions on February 22nd**, one during coffee hour after the service, and one on zoom in the evening on the same day. This gives you three weeks to listen to all 14 episodes in the series. If you don’t get to all 14, see which ones sound the most interesting to you and focus on those. I can guarantee you will learn something you didn’t know or you will think about things in a new way, no matter what you listen to.

Either follow this link <https://sceneonradio.org/seeing-white/> or search for “Scene on Radio” wherever you listen to podcasts and scroll to the “Seeing White” series of episodes (season 2). We look forward to your thoughts and insights on February 22nd!

A Little History About How Some of Our Cherished Sayings Came to be

by Mike Gold

Every week, except for the first Sunday of the month, we come together and recite our Unison Affirmation:

*Love is the spirit of this church,
and service is its law;
This is our great covenant:
To dwell together in peace,
To seek the truth in love,
And to help one another.*

On the first of the month, instead of the Unison Affirmation, we speak our Church Covenant. What we say is a shortened version of the covenant, the three lines in bold below. The full covenant reads as follows:

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By this covenant, we, the members of SouthWest Unitarian Universalist church establish these guidelines for how we will be with each other.

By committing ourselves to this covenant we will build an environment of trust that fosters personal growth and self-worth among our members and friends.

We will ensure the opportunity for free and responsible discussion of religious ideas while promoting an atmosphere of joy and celebration in our church community.

We will strive to listen to each other with an open mind and respond with compassion and respect.

In times of conflict we agree to be both sensitive and honest, and to speak directly with each other.

We agree to share the responsibilities necessary for the life of our church community.

We promise to follow these guidelines and be held accountable in our interactions as a community.

The full covenant is on display in Rev. Ali's office, if you ever want to see it.

As to how the covenant came about, Dan Paxson remembers that it came out of an all church meeting in 1998 at the Olmsted church. "I think," he says, "but am not sure, that it started as a 'Statement of How We Will Be Together' and later became our covenant. I think this may have happened when we had some turmoil in the church and were examining how we deal (or not deal) with conflict."

The Unison Affirmation, according to Dan, was initiated by Evin Carvill-Ziemer when she was our interim minister around 2012 or 2013. The words are not original, says Dan. They were written by Unitarian minister James Vila Blake, in 1894. "I think Evin tried several unison affirmations before landing on this one. Anyway, it stuck. We've been including it in the service ever since," notes Dan.

Before the Unison Affirmation, a Statement of Purpose (SoP) was recited each week. The words were:

*We meet to celebrate the miracle of our being
and the wonder and mystery of our universe.*

*We seek to provide a caring, accepting community that supports
ongoing individual and spiritual growth.*

*We strive to live our values, accepting our individual responsibility to be active
in environmental and social concerns in our church, community, and world.*

Ken Ellis, one of SWUU's founding members, recalls that the SoP emerged from a Board retreat in 1989, when David Cole served as the first interim minister. "We were at an Episcopal Retreat Center near Painesville," says Ken. "We broke into two groups to come up with a Statement of Purpose. When we came back together, it was like a miracle; the wording the two groups had was almost identical."

We also have a Mission Statement, which you can see on the central banner in our foyer before you enter the sanctuary. It reads:

*Inspire Wonder,
Radically Accept and Love,
Joyfully Connect and Serve.*

Dan recalls that the mission statement came from another all-church event in or around 2016. "The goal, I think, was to come up with something short and pithy (a virtual impossibility for UU's). I think Deb organized the way in which we came up with it. It was very consensual and communal."

The above are some of the words that have shaped SouthWest UU since it came into being in 1986. They remain inspiring today.

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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.