



The Forum



A Southwest Unitarian Universalist Publication

www.swuu.org

August 1, 2026

Sunday Services

10:30 AM

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



August 2

Live the Questions

We are living in the here and now – 2026 – a time of untamed, unchallenged AI use and development, a world on fire, and democracy in decline across the globe. And yet...we are human beings, and if we have a modicum of humility, we know that there are “vast aching open questions” of life, of our lives, of my life and your lives begging for answers. What does it mean to live in the questions, while at the same time remaining open to and taking in the good?

-Led by SWUU member anastasia birosh

Worship Associate: Sarajane Willson

Focus Collection: Southwest Unitarian Universalist Church

August 9

Question Box Revisited

During July's "Question Box Sunday" we celebrated questions and curiosity by giving you the opportunity to submit questions for our minister, Rev. Ali, to respond to. Come this Sunday for part two, when Rev. Ali will tackle your questions she wasn't able to get to in July's service.

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

Worship Associates: Cynthia Mondia & Valerie Hura

August 16

How Can I Keep From Singing?

Come this Sunday as we lift our voices in celebration of hymns that move us! *And check out our request for song suggestions in the article on page 4!*

-Led by SWUU members Janet LaBonne and Dan Paxson

August 23

Reverse Question Box

During our summer Question Box services, Rev. Ali has been responding to your questions. Now we flip it around! On this Sunday, all of us have a chance to explore some of life's big questions together in community.

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

Worship Associates: Kirk Jusko

August 30

One Person's Ceiling Is Another Person's Floor. Now What?

Given that we live in relationship with others, how do we navigate disagreements and differences? A reading and exploration of select Biblical and Talmudic passages.

-Led by Rabbi Eddie Sukol, founder of The Shul, Cleveland's Open Synagogue

Worship Associates: Deb Celinski

The Forum

Message from your Minister

Dear Ones,

I've been thinking a lot about identity lately. The big "Who am I?" and "What is my path?" kind of questions of life. I think that is natural during major life transitions (such as becoming a new parent).

Questions like this always require me to get quiet and listen. They beckon me toward the words of contemplatives and mystics. And right now my heart is fixated on the words of Dutch Catholic priest and theologian, Henri Nouwen. Specifically, what he calls the "Three Big Lies":

I am what I have.

I am what I do.

I am what others say about me.

Beloveds, what might happen if you released your grasp on all or any of these lies? Who is the you that is liberated from these misguided notions about yourself? Who are we when we stop bouncing between these three red herrings?

These are questions on my heart lately. I share them with you in case they may be helpful to you as well.

May we all come to know ourselves and each other in a way unobscured by these big lies, beloveds. May it be so, and amen.

With love and gratitude,
Rev. Ali

The Forum

Focus Offering for August: Our Beloved SWUUC

by Jan Wehn, Social Justice Committee

As is often the case in the summer, during August, we will not have a specific Nonprofit to which we are donating money. Instead, any extra money that you may donate for the Focus Offering will be given to SWUU, our favorite Nonprofit!

Beginning in September we will be changing the Focus Offering to “Share the Plate.” Please see the article below explaining this change.

Share the Plate

by Jan Wehn and Steve Doucette

A New Way to Support Our Local Nonprofits

Starting in September we will be changing the way we support local nonprofits whose work is compatible with our UU Values. As you know, we have been donating the offerings from our first Sunday in each month to a local nonprofit identified by our Social Justice Committee. We have called this a Focus Collection.

Background Information About the Upcoming Change

Over the past fiscal year the Board had a goal to review the ways that other UU Churches raise revenue and then see what changes we might make in our practices. A small Revenue Project Team was established. Chaired by Steve Doucette, the team reviewed practices by several other UU Churches and then recommended some changes to the Board and Minister in April. Jan Wehn, a current Board Member represented the Social Justice Committee at this meeting. These changes will be tested and implemented over a period of time, and include such actions as: One Year Endowment Investment Drive, Ongoing Engagement with Previous Members, etc. Share the Plate is among those changes.

Several UU Congregations have moved from a Focus Collection one Sunday each month to Share the Plate every Sunday. This practice emphasizes our interconnectedness with our community and engages all congregants, not just those who happen to be at church on the first Sunday of the month.

How Share the Plate Works

Starting in September, every Sunday we will share 50% of undesignated offerings to a local nonprofit. (Designated cash or checks for things like the Service Auction, Pledges, etc. will not be affected.)

Prior to September you will receive more detailed information to answer questions you might have about the details of Share the Plate.



The Forum

Covenant Groups

by Ken Ellis & Sarajane Willson

Covenant groups will begin again in September. Sarajane Willson and Ken Ellis will be facilitating and coordinating these meaningful gatherings. We are looking for 2-3 more people to facilitate a group and for interested people to sign up.

The covenant groups are gatherings of about 6 people to share their thoughts, experiences, and insights in reference to our monthly themes. The group listens, reflects, and shares without advising. It is about listening and knowing you are not alone with life's joys/sadness, misfortunes/successes. We all experience life and it is good to share and come to understand one another on a deeper level than the usual casual conversations.

There will be a sign up sheet in the coming weeks. Please let Ken or Sarajane know if you are interested in facilitating or participating.

Welcoming Congregation Renewal

by Dodi Lettus

A Welcoming Congregation is inclusive of all people who share our UU values of placing love at the center of our community by practicing generosity, supporting pluralism and transformation, working for equity and justice, and recognizing the interdependence of our world. Our LGBTQ+ beloveds face increasing intolerance and harm within our current political climate; therefore, we decided this was a good time to renew the commitment we first made in 1997 to become a Welcoming Congregation.

The UUA had developed a program to follow to renew this commitment which asked us to center the concerns of LGBTQ+ people through our Worship Services, recognize days important to LGBTQ+ people, expand our religious education for adults to include topics and issues of importance to the LGBTQ+ community, and support local and national groups that support and uplift the LGBTQ+ community.

I am happy to say that we have completed the UUA program. This involved the efforts of many people: Rev. Ali, Carolyn Stevens, Valerie Hura, Kirk Jusko, Deb Celinski, Gayle Doucette, Cynthia Mondia, Susan and Dan Paxson, Jan Wehn, Eli Butler, Adrienne Ellis and the SWUU Board, the Membership Committee, and all those who attended the Adult RE sessions held in April and May of this year. I was pleased to play a role in documenting this program for the UUA. Thank you all who helped successfully renew this important commitment!

Welcome does not stop here, of course. SWUU's commitment to "Inspire wonder, radically accept and love, joyfully connect and serve" is something we strive to live out every day in our community. We all play a part in making the mission of our church an everyday reality. All are welcome here!

The Hymn Sing Service is Coming!

by Janet Griffing-LaBonne and Dan Paxson

We are putting together a Hymn Sing for the service on August 16! We would love to include your favorite hymn as part of that service, so please drop an email to Dan or Janet with the title of your favorite hymn/hymns!

If you'd like to share a brief remark about your hymn choice, you can do that, too. You can either share it during the service or if speaking in public isn't your thing, simply write out what you'd like us to know about your favorite hymn, and we'll read them aloud.

We'd like to have your submissions no later than Friday, August 7 so we have time to get the order of service put together. If you have any questions, please let us know. Again, send your hymn titles directly to one of us rather than to SWUU list. Thanks!

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

GCC Action: Judicial Candidate Forum

by Susan Paxson, GCC Delegate

Major actions are an important way that we can support GCC's social justice efforts in the Cleveland Community and educate ourselves. This GCC action will focus on pretrial justice.

From GCC: "We will have four contested races this November for judges of the Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court (General Division). These are the judges who preside over felony criminal cases. They decide who remains in jail before trial and who gets out, as well as their sentences, if convicted. Too often, people skip these races when they vote. Come and learn about the candidates and the issues which affect pretrial justice."

GCC has a goal of 460 people to attend this action which will be held on **Thursday, September 17th at 7PM at UUCC in Shaker Heights**. Please help us show up and help hold the judges accountable! Mary Bowers, Ellen Hansen-Ellis and I are planning to attend but we hope that our church can show up with 15 people or more. Carpooling is possible. If you would like to attend but do not drive at night, please reach out to me. We need to give them a number at the next GCC meeting, so please let us know by August 20th. Thank you!

Men's Group

by Ken Ellis

The Men's Group will meet at my home, Friday, August 28 at 6:30 pm for a cookout. Plan to bring a lawn chair because there may not be enough seating. Bring a side dish, beverage, and something for yourself to grill. 32 Manning Dr., Berea. Our wildflower meadow should still be full of summer wildflowers to enjoy and enhance our outdoor experience.

If the weather is not favorable, we will meet at Aladdin's in Middleburg Heights, across from the hospital on Bagley Rd.

So many of you have asked when we will meet again. My summer schedule is busy and this was the first date I have open. I had hoped to get together in June or July. Anyway, it will be great to gather again after many months.

For those who are new and have not attended our Men's Group, it is open to all and we enjoy our camaraderie with interesting conversations, laughter, and good food.

I look forward to a pleasant evening with you!

Please let me know if you plan to attend.

"A man's friendships are one of the best measures of his worth."

-Charles Darwin

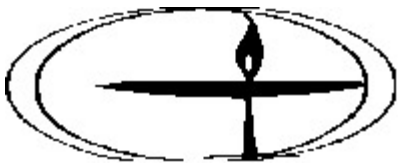
The Forum

Sharing and Caring

Joyce Gilliland and **Valerie Powers** share that Joyce's surgery went very well, but her overall recovery is slow, and can take up to a year. Texts to Joyce are welcome. They are both really happy that Valerie is home from California!

**Please send your joys and sorrows to forum@swuu.org for inclusion in the next issue.*

**Southwest Unitarian Universalist Church
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North Royalton, Ohio 44133**



We are happy to mail The Forum to anyone who would like to receive it.