



The Forum



A Southwest Unitarian Universalist Publication

www.swuu.org

September 1, 2026

Sunday Services

10:30 AM

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



September 6

Weaving Together Community

Community is not something that simply springs from the ground. It is something we create together—a beautiful, messy, chaotic work of art, woven from the unique threads each of us brings. Join us as we explore what it means to build and sustain community through a nontraditional, interactive, all-ages service.

-Led by SWUU Worship Team member Mackenzie Brunswick, supported by Builder Dan Paxson, Weaver Janet LaBonne, and Taskmaster Deb Celinski

Worship Associate: Janet LaBonne

Share the Plate Offering: Minister's Discretionary Fund

September 13

Have You Been to the Well?: A Water Service

As we return to each other as the summer months may have taken us in different directions, we celebrate with our annual Unitarian Universalist water mingling 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).** Let us ground ourselves in the spiritual nourishment and sustenance that can be found in community.

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

Worship Associates: Kirk Jusko & Cynthia Mondia

September 20

We Begin Again In Love

In the midst of the Jewish High Holy Days we gather this Sunday to discover the new beginnings that can come with practices of repentance, repair, and forgiveness.

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

Worship Associates: Ken Ellis

September 27

First Steps

Lao Tzu famously wrote, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." It's a powerful thought. But knowledge of its fundamental truth doesn't explain how we summon the strength to take that first step. When facing a major spiritual or physical change, challenge, or endeavor in our lives, how do we actually convince ourselves to begin? Join Mike Gold and Dan Paxson as they share their perspectives on this question.

-Led by SWUU Worship Team members Dan Paxson and Mike Gold

The Forum

Message from your Minister

Beginnings

Beloveds,

Our worship theme for the coming month of September is “Beginnings.” This theme draws me back to my very first worship service with all of you dear folks at SouthWest UU Church back in 2022. The theme of that service was beginnings as well and so I recently revisited that sermon that I preached on that first morning together. Even after four years of ministry together, it still holds true. Here is an excerpt:

Every beginning we encounter in our lives is both a culmination of what’s come before and also holds the potential for what can be. No beginning exists in isolation.

As we shake hands with each other this morning, as hands have lit our chalice, as my hands anchor onto this pulpit, as hands cut cake downstairs, these hands are both shaped by and shaping this church’s beautiful community and its meaningful story.

A story sculpted by hands that wrote and signed a church charter nearly 35 years ago. Hands that pushed shovels into the earth to break ground for this special and accessible building. Hands that prepared coffee early in the morning at church campouts. Hands that have lovingly arranged flowers on this altar table. Hands that have played instruments to fill this space with music. Hands that have held each other in moments of sorrow. Hands that have carried the church’s banner at Pride marches. Hands that wrote down this congregation’s covenant and hands that signed it. Hands that have clicked “Join Meeting” on Zoom when meeting in person has not been safe or possible. All a part of why we are, what we do, and what we will yet become.

Those hands among us and not yet among us that will continue to grasp the handles of our front doors as they arrive for committee meetings, programs, or worship services. Those hands among us and not yet among us that will reach for each other in times of need. Those hands among us and not yet among us that will light candles of vigil and lift signs of protest. Those hands among us and not yet among us that will continue to find new and meaningful ways to hold our UU values and make them come alive in our community.

Those hands among us and not yet among us that will build....that will create.....that will discover what is possible. All a part of why we are, what we do, and what we will yet become.

Every beginning can launch something new, but every beginning is also a continuation of a story that is already in motion. Every beginning sits where what has been intersects with what is yet to come. Where what made this moment possible meets what is possible in the moments to come. Beginnings are thresholds that call us into reverence and wonder – at what’s gone before us, where we are now, and what is ahead. An opportunity to lift up what got us here, to honor what is here and to look forward to how we may shape what can be.

Let that be our call right now, dear ones. To honor the beauty that is in this precious community and to shape what it can be. To do it together. What a joy it is to do this together - to occupy this threshold of beginning together. With sculpted hands, palms open ready to create.

May it be so and amen.

With love and gratitude,
Rev. Ali

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Share the Plate 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. As a reminder, all undesignated offerings at each Sunday service will be split 50/50% between the church and the selected nonprofit for that particular month.

The Minister's Discretionary Fund is used by Rev. Ali to assist our own beloved members and members of our local community 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 Additional Nonprofit Offering on the memo line. Or you may use the Vanco GivePlus app and just check Additional Nonprofit Offering or use the Zelle app that SWUU is now accepting. I just used it for the first time and it worked easily and instantly. As always, thank you for your generosity.

Community Worship Project Teams

by Deb Celinski, on behalf of the Worship Associates

One of the many great things about Unitarian Universalism is that the pulpit is not limited to ordained clergy. We believe that everyone has wisdom and a story to share! And we also believe that there are multiple ways to tell that story.

We Worship Associates want to help you share yours.

We plan to form Community Worship Project Teams to help congregants share their experiences and insight in a Sunday Worship Service. These Teams will consist of an experienced Worship Associate and one or more congregants. The Worship Associate will help to guide members of their Team in planning and presenting a Sunday Service. Team members would commit to meeting with their Worship Associate for at least two planning meetings.

We Worship Associates and Rev. Ali are excited about this initiative to diversify the voices in our pulpit and hope you will be too.

Those interested in participating in a Community Worship Project Team can contact Rev Ali at minister@swuu.org.

The Forum

What You Should Know about Share the Plate Starting September 6th

by Steve Doucette, Treasurer

Starting at the September 6th service, 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.

What you should know:

- Starting in September, every Sunday we will share 50% of undesigned offerings to a local nonprofit. Designated cash or checks for things like the Service Auction, Pledges, etc. will not be affected.
- If you put cash in the offering basket, 50% will automatically be shared with the local nonprofit.
- If you put a check in the offering basket without designating your intentions in the memo line, the donation will be shared 50% with the local nonprofit.
- If using a check, indicate your intentions on the memo line. Use the options below to be crystal clear about your intentions.
- You may wish to use the new larger donation envelopes to designate the intention of your cash or check offering. The donation envelopes will give you the following options:

<u>Option</u>	<u>What it means</u>
Shared Plate Offering	Will be split 50% with the local nonprofit
Pledge	Will go only toward your annual pledge
Special Gift	Will go only to our Church
Auction-Fundraising	Will go only toward your purchases or donations
Additional Nonprofit Offering	Will go only to the local nonprofit

About Vanco online donations:

- When you log into Vanco you will find the same options as listed above.
- If you currently have automatic recurring donations set up in Vanco, check Vanco to ensure recurring donations are correct. You may have to stop the recurring donation then set it up using the new options described above.

Questions/Clarifications:

Please contact me or Carolyn Stevens with any questions or to help clarify anything that's on your mind.

Steve Doucette

Carolyn Stevens

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

Greater Cleveland Congregations (GCC) Update

by Susan Paxson, GCC delegate

For those of you who may be new to our church, Great Cleveland Congregations (GCC) is an interfaith organization including Jewish, Christian, Unitarian Universalist and some non-religious groups. Our member organizations work together trying to make change in the city of Cleveland in social justice projects including voter access and participation, the criminal justice system, and humanitarian work such as access to health care in some of the poorest Cleveland neighborhoods. We organize to amplify our power and influence. One way SWUU members and friends can help is by supporting actions such as the Judges Forum on September 17th. 14 Swuu members have signed up to attend! Just by showing up, we let the candidates see what we really care about in the justice system. If you just heard about this and would like to attend, feel free to reach out to me.

At the last monthly meeting, I became aware of another way that some of our members and friends might be able to help out. The Battle for Democracy is offering one-day events where we can sign up to canvass voters door to door or phone bank residents. I am hoping to sign up for one of these days and could give someone a ride if they also want to help out. Please check out the QR code or go to the website listed on the flyer on the next page and see if one of the dates works for you and call me to see if we can coordinate. Call or text. I know I am not the only one who hopes to try to boost voter turnout in Cleveland, especially since our administration seems to want to make voting more difficult. The effort is non-partisan, and we engage with voters to encourage them to get out and vote either in person or via phone.

POW WOW

OCT. 3 & 4

Sponsored by Three Sisters Intertribal
10am-9pm Saturday
10am-5pm Sunday

Atwood Lake Fall Festival
9500 Lakeview Rd.
Mineral City, OH 44656



POW WOW GLOW DANCE

Saturday night at dark (approx. 7:30pm)

Native American Drummers, Dancers & Singers

Demonstrations, Foods, Arts & Crafts are happening throughout the day Saturday & Sunday.

SWUU has had focus collections to help support this event both this year and last. The Pow Wow is part of the Atwood Lake Fall Festival, which also offers many arts & crafts booths, music, and concessions. Parking is free.

Attending the Native American section of the fall festival is a great way to learn more about the Native American presence, traditions, and culture here in Ohio.

Mike Gold and Sharron Abbey will be attending the event on Saturday and have room for 2 additional people in his car. If interested, please contact him.

This event takes place only once a year and is a fun and memorable experience.



**GREATER
CLEVELAND
CONGREGATIONS**

**Building Power.
Transforming Communities.**

JOIN GCC'S BATTLE FOR DEMOCRACY

**WE NEED YOU FOR THE
GENERAL ELECTION!**

NOVEMBER 3, 2026

Greater Cleveland Congregations is organizing across Cuyahoga County to build power, strengthen our communities, and turn out voters for the November 3 General Election.

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED:



**NEIGHBORHOOD
CAPTAINS**



CANVASSERS



PHONE BANKING

WE WILL BE OPERATING IN THE FOLLOWING NEIGHBORHOODS:



CLEVELAND



FAIRFAX



**SLAVIC
VILLAGE**



EUCLID



**CLEVELAND
HEIGHTS**



**LEE-
HARVARD**

Locations and times will be announced closer to the date.



DATES OF ACTION (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)

- ☐ September 26th
- ☐ September 27th
- ☐ October 3rd
- ☐ October 4th
- ☐ October 17th
- ☐ October 18th
- ☐ November 1
- ☐ November 3
(Election Day)

WE CAN WIN WHEN WE WORK TOGETHER.

SIGN UP TODAY!



gcc-ohio.org



**Scan to
get involved!**

NEIGHBORHOOD CAPTAINS: Please complete this form if you are returning.

The Forum

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



Saturday, October 17th

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!

The Forum

Sharing and Caring

Rae Brewer and Jen Jenks-Brewer are pleased to announce that their family is growing and they are looking forward to raising their baby in our SWUU community!

The **Ellis family** received some good news this week. Son/brother **Jordan**, who has been deployed with the Army National Guard in the Middle East since February, is coming home early! Jordan should get home in late October (instead of late November). The whole family is thrilled and relieved that his very difficult tour is ending sooner than expected.

Joyce Gilliland is working with the neurologist to improve her symptoms but it is a struggle. She and Valerie thank everyone for their care. They appreciate phone calls, hanging out, movies, or going for coffee. Please text Joyce first to see if it is a good time to call or visit.

Aidan Sellman, our dedicated child care provider, is home recovering from gall bladder surgery. If you would like to send her a card, the address is

**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.