



The Forum



A Southwest Unitarian Universalist Publication

www.swuu.org

October 1, 2026

Sunday Services

10:30 AM

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



October 4

Quiet Courage

This Sunday, let us look beyond big bold acts of heroism to uncover the quieter courage that we don't always recognize.

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

Worship Associates: Valerie Hura & Cynthia Mondia

Share the Plate Offering: The Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Springfield Region

October 11

Saying the Thing Out Loud

The first time we say something out loud can feel big and it can take courage. Come this Sunday as we lift up these big life-changing moments together.

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

Worship Associate: Kirk Jusko

October 18

Encouragement In Community

"Encourage" comes from an old French word, meaning "to make strong" or "hearten." Come this Sunday as we help make each other strong. May we hearten you in your life's journey and offer you courage.

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

Worship Associate: Deb Celinski

October 25

Fear and Courage

We make significant decisions based on our experiences and influences. What causes us to be brave or afraid when we face decisions of consequence? Ken Ellis will share his insights on this subject.

-Led by SWUU Worship Team member Ken Ellis

Worship Associate: Janet LaBonne

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Message from your Minister

Courage

Dear Ones,

Our worship theme for the month of October is “Courage.” Perhaps it’s October’s spooky vibes, but as I wrestle with this theme, I find myself thinking more about fear than courage. And in our current political and social landscape in our country, we’ve been seeing and maybe even feeling a lot of fear, haven’t we?

I really appreciated the way political organizer and strategist, Scott Nakagawa, illuminated why this is in his newsletter, *The Anti-Authoritarian Playbook*. In a May 2026 post, he shared:

Fear is the fulcrum of authoritarianism.

A fulcrum, Merriam-Webster has it, is “the support about which a lever turns” or “one that supplies capability for action.” It’s what converts a small amount of force into the movement of a much larger mass. A pry bar alone moves nothing. A pry bar plus a fulcrum moves a boulder.

Hang with me for a minute and consider what this means for authoritarianism. A handful of people cannot force the compliance of tens of millions. They can, however, arrange conditions under which tens of millions force their own compliance. Fear is the fulcrum that makes that lever work.

Despite its reputation, authoritarianism is not mainly a story about brute force...In each case, a minority faction governs a resistant majority - not by overwhelming us, but by arranging the conditions under which resistance feels irrational.

Those conditions are mostly made of fear.

Fear of losing what little one has. Fear of the stranger, the migrant, the trans kid, the protestor, the professor. Fear of being alone in one’s objection, of being the first to say no, of being wrong, of being watched. Fear of collapse. Fear of chaos. Fear that any alternative is worse than this. Fear, above all, of one another.

...This is why the authoritarian project spends so much on disinformation and so little, relatively, on coercion. The disinformation is the real labor. The goal is not to make people love the regime. The goal is to make them doubt each other. They don’t need us to believe in them. They just need us to never find each other.

May we find each other, beloveds. Amid the fear that has been sown in our country, may we find each other.

With love and gratitude,
Rev. Ali

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Share the Plate Offering for October: The Society of St. Vincent de Paul Springfield Region

by Jan Wehn, Social Justice Committee

Our “Share the Plate” collection will be designated to help the Haitian Community. Carol Thombs' niece is active in supporting the community and recommended St. Vincent de Paul, a non profit organization focusing on caring for the poor. Their many services include assistance with independent living, emergency assistance, food pantry support and thrift store clothing and voucher programs. They offer walk-in services and resources for Haitian immigrants needing help with translation and community navigation. They also offer legal immigration clinics to expand services for immigration requirements and connect immigrants to jobs. They collaborate with other non-profits, faith based agencies, and local service agencies. Their goal is to do the best for our marginalized neighbors. You can put a donation in the collection basket or donate through Vanco or Zelle. Just remember to designate Share the Plate. Thank you for your generosity.

Covenant Groups by Ken Ellis

Covenant groups will begin again in October. Sarajane Willson and Ken Ellis will be facilitating and coordinating these meaningful gatherings.

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 is a sign-up sheet at church.

Please let Ken or Sarajane know if you are interested in facilitating or participating.

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UU 101 and SWUU 101

by Susan Paxson, Membership Committee

We at SWUU are so pleased to see lots of new faces coming through our doors and returning again and again! You are welcome here. Would you like to learn more about Unitarian Universalism and this church? Does SWUU feel like a place where you belong? Are you curious about getting more involved? Are you wondering about what it means to become a member? Two times a year, we offer a series of classes for people who might be new to UU or even people who have been coming for quite a while. In UU 101, we will share a bit about our spiritual journeys, talk about the highlights of Unitarian Universalist history and theology, and look at how our faith continues to evolve today. In SWUU 101, the second class, we will talk more about our congregation, ways to get connected, and what it means to be a member of Southwest UU Church.

We are inviting everyone to attend both classes. UU 101 will be held on Sunday, Nov 1st at noon and SWUU 101 will be the following Sunday, Nov 8th at the same time. The classes usually last around an hour, and it is not too late to sign up! We are holding the classes at church, and we hope that you might be interested in joining us. They are offered by our Membership Committee and will be facilitated by Rev. Ali. Attending them is one of the steps toward membership for those considering joining, but it is also just a way of finding out more about us. If you are unable to attend this fall, this series will be offered again in the spring. If you would like to attend UU 101 and/or SWUU 101, please email me or call. If you need childcare, please let us know! We hope to see you there!

Safety Update

by Steve LaBonne, Safety Team

Your Board has been working on defining procedures for responding to emergencies, (that we hope will never happen!) should they occur during a service or other event at SWUU. There is now a document outlining emergency information and procedures beginning on page 10 of the church policy manual, which can be accessed from our website. We recommend that everyone become familiar with this document. We will maintain a team of volunteers who are familiar with these procedures and are prepared to help lead the response to an emergency, including inviting able-bodied people to assist in evacuating those with mobility challenges. The team currently consists of Steve LaBonne, Adrienne Ellis, Steve Doucette, and Dan Paxson. Anyone interested in serving in this role is invited to contact any of those individuals, and in general suggestions and questions are welcome. Finally, the Board has approved the purchase of an AED (Automatic Electric Defibrillator) for use in cardiac emergencies. Stay tuned for more safety updates in the near future.

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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

Getting to Know You *An Online Interview with Jamie McNeil*

What are your pronouns?

He/They

How would you describe yourself?

I describe myself as a trans, bisexual young adult.

Tell us a little about your religious background.

I was raised in evangelical Christianity by parents who were raised Baptist and Anabaptist, respectively. I grew up in a Church of the Brethren before my family moved to attending a Baptist church when I was in high school. Throughout my teenage years, I struggled to navigate the cognitive dissonance between my belief that the claims of fundamentalist Protestantism about sin and the afterlife were true with my deeply-held experiences as a queer person and growing skepticism about young-earth cosmology. During my freshman year of college at Ashland University, I took an intro-level Hebrew Bible course that exploded any lingering rationale for fundamentalist readings of the Bible and set the stage for both my ongoing spiritual exploration and academic interest in Abrahamic religions.



What led you to SouthWest UU Church?

Following a transcendent spiritual experience deeply colored by the expansive Christian theology of Brian McLaren and the moving words of a UU acquaintance on the nature of holiness, I became increasingly interested in what my life could look like without the domineering, moralistic Jesus-God of my childhood. I transferred colleges about half a year later, beginning my sophomore year at Baldwin Wallace -- the first time I had ever lived away from my parents. I researched UU churches in the vicinity of campus, and SWUU being the closest geographically as well as carrying the Welcoming Congregation mark made it an obvious first church for me to visit.

How does being a part of our SWUU community make your life better?

The community at SWUU makes my life better in so many ways! Perhaps the most oft-repeated, SWUU provides me with theology that isn't "stuck". I am a very curious person whose understanding of the world is eclectic by nature, and it is so meaningful to me to be in a religious community where exploration and growth beyond what brought you to that place is cause for celebration and deepening of connection rather than a cause for parting ways. Additionally, SWUU has brought me the wonderful and deeply meaningful intergenerational connections I have found valuable in every church I've been a part of, but without the accompanying religious coercion that always sullied these relationships in conservative Christian churches. SWUU has also brought me the great joy of connections with folks nearer my age who have different interests and life experiences from me. As a student at a small, private university, my friends and I have more in common with one another than we don't, and I deeply value the rich possibilities for connection with and learning from those whose lives have taken a different path than my own.

Are you active in any volunteer roles or teams at SWUU?

I am a member of the visuals team.

If you are employed, what do you do for work?

I work as a theatrical sound and lighting technician

Tell us a little about your family.

Myself excluded, my immediate family consists of my mom, dad, and younger brother. My parents are farmers and my brother plans to continue the farming operation as his career. My father's parents passed before I was born, so I have always had one pair of grandparents on my mother's side, who are also farmers. Of all my relatives, I am closest with two of my great aunts: my grandfather's twin sister Bobbi, and Karen, the wife of one of my grandfather's brothers. My partner of nearly 4 years, Steven, is currently in their final year at Purdue Fort Wayne pursuing a Masters Degree in Computer Science.

Do you have any goals you are working toward right now? What are they?

I am currently pursuing my BA in Theatre Technical & Design Studies.



The Stewardship Committee, Stewardship Friends,
and the Hospitality Committee are excited to host the

2026 SWUU Fall Fest

When: Saturday, October 24th, 1-4 pm (Raffle drawings to be held at 3 pm)

Please note the date change!

Where: North Park, 3595 Grafton Road in Brunswick,
or at SWUU in case of inclement weather

What to Expect: Fun, Food, Family-Friendly Activities and Socializing

Fall Fest will offer outdoor socializing, pumpkin decorating, apple cider, a Halloween costume contest, craft activities, face painting, snacks, raffles, and more! North Park has a fire pit, walking trails and other amenities for us to enjoy.

Great News – It's free! No charge to attend. Except for the raffle, there is no charge for any of the activities, including the potluck snacks.

Voluntary donations: We will provide a donation box if you wish to support our church with a voluntary donation. You don't need cash. We will have donation forms and will bill you.

Raffle tickets: You won't need cash if you want to buy raffle tickets – we will bill you for the tickets you request. Tickets are \$1 each.

How can you help to make this a successful event?

- **Bring snacks to share.** The hospitality committee will provide cider. If you can, bring some of your favorite snacks to share. Finger foods that don't require utensils are recommended!
- **Wear a Halloween costume.** You can enter our costume contest or just enjoy being in character. Many categories will be awarded fun prizes.
- **Participate in the raffle.** The stewardship team has collected several fun items for the raffle. Consider buying raffle tickets for \$1 each at the event. You can ask a friend to purchase tickets for you if you can't be there. You don't need to be present to win!
- **Just show up.** Bring family and friends. Everyone is welcome!

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Sharing and Caring

One of our beloved charter members, **David Newell**, passed away peacefully on Saturday, September 19th, surrounded by his loving family. David was a long-time choir member, and along with his wife, Judy, actively supported SWUU in so many other ways. He will be sorely missed. There will be a celebration of life at SWUU on **Sunday, October 18th**. Gathering will begin at 2:00 pm and the service will begin at 2:30, followed by a light reception. Cards can be sent to his daughters:

Please keep **Nancy Matsko** in your thoughts and prayers. She fell on her driveway and is having surgery to put pins in to help her hip heal. She will be going through rehab after the surgery and more details will follow about how we can support her. Her spirits are good!

Jan Futhey recently fell in her home, but did not break anything! She is at a rehab center with lots of support from her family, and the therapist said she is doing great!. She is not accepting visitors or calls, but would LOVE receiving cards. They can be sent to her home which is listed in the directory!

**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.