



The Forum



A Southwest Unitarian Universalist Publication

www.swuu.org

December 1, 2024

Sunday Services

10:30 AM

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



December 1

The Present of Presence

As we begin this holiday season of giving, let's consider the gift of being present. Please join Mike Gold, Cynthia Mondia, and Dan Paxson from our Worship Team as we explore the meaning of, and our relationship to presence in our lives.

-Led by Worship Team members Mike Gold, Cynthia Mondia, and Dan Paxson

Worship Associates: Mike Gold, Cynthia Mondia, Dan Paxson

Focus Collection: Guest at your Table 2024-2025

December 8

Incarnation

The word "incarnation" has often been used to refer to the embodiment of a god or spirit. What might we as Unitarian Universalists learn from this concept? How can we be present to the divine in the world around us?

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

Worship Associate: anastasia birosh

December 15

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 Associate: Ken Ellis

December 22

Winter Solstice Pageant

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

-Led by DRE Carolyn Stevens and Rev. Ali Peters

Worship Associate: Dan Paxson

December 24

Christmas Eve Service (5:30pm)

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

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

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December 29

Journeying: A Way of Life, Self Discovery , and Discernment

The presentation will focus on the individual's journey and meditative reflection on the events of your journey to find meaning. I will also focus on ways to make discernment/choices in life and rules we will or can live by that help manage those decisions to make them more successful for us.

-Led by Steve Body, Certified Spiritual Director and Reiki Master

Worship Associates: Mike Gold

Message from your Minister

Presence

Dear Ones,

Our worship theme for the month of December is “Presence.” As I reflect on this theme and on everything we hold on our hearts lately, I feel drawn to one of my favorite poems. You may have come across it before – if that is the case, I wonder if you might try experiencing it anew right now, in this moment:

“The Peace of Wild Things”

by Wendell Berry

*When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children’s lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.*

Each and every time I revisit this poem, it brings my body into an exhale. What a gift.

In the month of December, we encounter the frantic business of the holiday season mixed with the cold quiet of shorter days and longer nights. Amid all of this, how might you find ways to rest in the grace of the world?

With love and gratitude,

Rev. Ali

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Focus Collection for December: Guest at your Table 2024-2025 by Jan Wehn, Social Justice Committee

UUSC's Guest at Your Table is an annual intergenerational program to raise support for and awareness about human rights issues. It commemorates Grassroot Partnerships in over 20 countries. This church year is celebrating the 50th anniversary of the program with the theme **Expanding the Welcome Table**. The partnered centered advocacy and activism includes supporting:

1. Young climate activists in the Marshall Islands
2. LGBTQ+ leaders in the Ukraine
3. Haitian Academics researching racism's impacts of migrants of color in the US
4. Trans organizers forming networks of safety and welcome

Donations can be put in our collection using a check or Vanco, but it may be more efficient to mail check with GAYT in memo line directly to:

UUSC
PO Box 808
Newark, NJ 07101-08

You can also donate online using secure donation page at uusc.org/givetoguest. **Any individual donation of \$150 or more will be matched by the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock in Manhasset, New York.** Please check out the UUSC's website to learn more details of the program.

Thank you for continuing to support UUSC.

Urban Hope Update by Jan Wehn, Social Justice Committee

The Urban Hope Experience on Sunday was a bit of a wild ride. Nancy & Denny Peltola and I arrived at the Storefront at 2:30 for set up.

Several guests were outside and a fight broke out...let's say there was much colorful language and negative behavior! Anne and Mick Stentz arrived at this time. Although this can be disconcerting, Anne worked at diffusing the situation! It was impressive! The guests came in around 3:05. There was some tension in the air and a couple more verbal arguments, but all in all it was a great afternoon with most of the guests very appreciative for the delicious homemade food. Nancy made the traditional "Urban Hope Casserole." Anne brought her famous Corn Soufflé dish that was quite a hit. Carol Jaggars and Lydia Avery made beautiful tossed salads that were devoured. We had fruit, cheese crackers, and bars for takeaways, and of course, Angela baked her delicious desserts. It feels good to provide disadvantaged people with flavorful food and a caring environment. Plan on joining us sometime. Thanks to for the very welcome cash donations. Our next visit is Sunday, December 8 from 3-5.

Join UUs Together in December by Don Bryant, UU's Together

Many of us worked for voter turnout and education on Issue 1 and did NOT see the results we were hoping for. We know that, to move forward, we gain strength from each other in spirit. We are meeting at a different time from our usual 4th Monday. On Monday, December 2 at 7pm, UUs Together (SWUU, West Shore UU, and UUCF folx) will gather to share our successes, our disappointments, and learn what each congregation and other groups are planning as we face our future. We need time to rest, and we need time to fortify for our future actions. Text Don for the zoom link. Join us!

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SWUU Decorating and Cooky Baking by Susan Paxson, Membership

This is an annual tradition for members and friends of all ages. On Saturday, December 7th from 2:00 PM until 4:00 or maybe a little later, come over to the church and help us put up and decorate our Christmas tree. Ken Ellis heads up this part of our party. You are welcome to come in and help, or just hang out and enjoy the festive spirit of others. If you enjoy making cookies, you are encouraged to bring a batch of your favorite cookie dough and bring it to church. We have pans and other supplies there, but feel free to bring your own, if you prefer. Together we will roll, cut out, drop, and/or decorate whatever we bring. This year, we plan to have some cutout sugar cookies already baked for people who would rather decorate than bake. We will have colored frosting "paint" with brushes and sprinkles to put on them. At the end of the afternoon, everyone can take home a variety of cookies. It is always a lot of fun. Even if you can't come the whole time, just drop in for some holiday cheer. Please email me if you have questions. No rsvp is necessary! Hope to see you there!

Men's Group Gathering by Ken Ellis

The SWUU Men's Group will gather for dinner at Aladdin's, Friday, December 6, 6:30 pm. 18334 Bagley Rd., Middleburg Heights. Across from the hospital.

For those who are new or have never attended, we meet for dinner and conversation. Topics of conversation are always interesting and there are always laughs. Please let Ken Ellis know if you plan to attend so he can give a heads up for seating.

YOU'RE INVITED TO OUR CONCERT! by Ellen Hansen-Ellis

A group of musical SWUU folks is presenting a concert on Saturday, Dec. 14th at 3PM at our church. A core group of church members has already signed up to come via the 2024 Service Auction, but we are inviting all of you to attend! It will be a mix of choral and instrumental music, some holiday-themed, and all drawn from a wide range of eras and styles. Singers include Adrienne Ellis, Dan and Susan Paxson, and Charles and Janet Williams, with piano accompaniment from Ellen Hansen-Ellis, percussion from Pat Gaughan, and solo piano, flute, and oboe contributions from Charles, Ellen and Janet. There is something for everyone; vintage pop tunes, classic choral works, sweet a cappella, and some lovely Christmas works.

Please join us! The concert benefits SWUU (100%), and there will be a freewill offering for those who did not initially sign up. Service auction cost was \$20, but please give what you can.

'Hope to see you there!

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 dates listed on our website calendar.

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

After Hours RE!

by Carolyn Stevens, DRE

Join us for our 2nd After Hours RE on Friday December 20th! We had a blast last month and decided to do it again. We will have some dinner, play some games, be a bit crafty, and build stronger bonds with our friends! We will have a monthly theme with love at the center! Bonus is that parents are welcome to enjoy some free time or present wrapping! Pre-registration is required by emailing office@swuu.org

From Your Board President

Hi all,

I wanted to give you an update on some of the behind-the-scenes work taking place here at SWUU. Each board year, the board assembles for a board retreat to set goals for the upcoming year and reflect on our progress so far. This year, one of our priorities is helping our church be more visible to our community. At our last board meeting, we voted to amend our event use policy to make it more simple and transparent to those who may want to use our space, as well as more accessible to groups that align with our values who may not otherwise be able to afford it. Our board continues to brainstorm along these lines, and plans on leading a worship service next spring to do this brainstorming work together as a congregation.

In addition to this, safety and security continues to be an ongoing priority. Our safety/security team has historically brainstormed safety/security measures and taken turns monitoring the door during services in the past. This is a conversation happening not just at our church, but at UU churches across the country as we continue to grapple with an ever-changing landscape here in the United States. As of now, our safety/security team no longer has a leader. If safety and security is something that you have on your mind lately, and you would like to be involved (as a participant or as a leader), please let me know so I can help connect you.

Another final update I want to give you is that myself, Adrienne Ellis, Eli Butler, and Deb Celinski will be helping facilitate an LGBTQ+ support group at our church on the first Tuesday of each month, beginning in January. We plan on advertising this group not just within the church but outside of SWUU as well, so our church can be a community resource. I hope that this can be a safe space for LGBTQ+ community members to find support and encouragement in each other.

I know many are feeling fear and uncertainty as we approach the new year and all the changes it will bring, but I am grateful that we have each other. I look forward to meeting all the new folks who will be finding their way to us in this upcoming year!

Blessings,
Rae

Adult Continuing Education

THE HISTORY AND THEOLOGY OF COVENANT

**December 5th, 12th, 19th
January 2nd, 9th and 16th
at 7pm - 8:30pm**

This group will discuss the UUInstitutes class *The History and Theology of Covenant* over zoom to deepen our understanding of covenantal relationships that define our faith. Requires \$15 registration with the UUInstitute for the class. This opportunity will be shared with other UU congregations in Kent, Akron, Wooster, SWUU, East Shore and others. Get to know your Ohio area UU's!

Scan the QR code to sign up.
Email rev@uufwc.org for questions



The Forum



-SAVE THE DATE-

**Annual Service Auction
Saturday, February 22, 2025
Starting at 4:00 pm**

The Service Auction is our biggest fundraiser part 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.

As we start the planning process,

- 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.
- We will also be bringing back the dessert dance! If you'd like to contribute a cake or other baked goods for this activity, please contact Susan Paxson.

Stay tuned for other 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.