



# The Forum



A Southwest Unitarian Universalist Publication

[www.swuu.org](http://www.swuu.org)

March 1, 2025

*Daylight Savings Begins*  
**March 9**  
*Spring Forward*

## Sunday Services

10:30 AM

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



### **March 2**

*When There is No Ground*

How do we deal with feeling groundless in life? What can we trust in amid all of life's uncertainty?

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters

Worship Associates: Kirk Jusko

Focus Collection: Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio

### **March 9**

*Strong Is What We Make Each Other: An All Ages Service*

Come this Sunday for an interactive all ages service of storytelling! In this worship service we will sing, drum and hear the story of Monkey and Hare's contest to build the best hut and the unexpected gifts they find along the way. Since this is a service for all ages, there will be no religious education classes today.

-Led by Rev. Ali Peters & DRE Carolyn Stevens

Worship Associate: Mike Gold

### **March 16**

*Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're In with Unexpected Resilience and Creative Power*

We'll explore the book/"road map" by two eco-spiritual activists, Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone, addressing despair toward climate change and assaults on democracy.

-Led by Rev. Mary Grigolia & Barbara Walker

Worship Associate: Ken Ellis

### **March 23**

*Expanding Our Ministry*

In troubling times, support and collaboration within communities is more important than ever. How can SWUU be a source of solidarity, support, and unity in the Greater Cleveland community in the upcoming years? This interactive service will explore the knowledge, connections, and ideas you all have to help SWUU expand its ministry to those who need it most.

-Led by the members of SWUU's Board of Trustees: Rae Brewer, Adrienne Ellis, Steve Doucette, Dan Paxson, Katie Maslar, Jan Wehn, and Sue Wraight

### **March 30**

*Rematriation*

What are the meanings of the Red Road and Rematriation? How do we honor indigeneity as we travel through our lives?

-Led by Cindi Byron-Dixon, Pastor Peace Community Church

Worship Associate: Dan Paxson

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## Message from your Minister

Beloveds,

Our worship theme for the month of March is “Trust.” As I have been reflecting on this theme, I can’t help but think about my upcoming parental leave when I will be away March 11-June 17 as my husband, Justin, and I welcome our baby into our family. This will be the first time I’ve had to take a leave of absence from a ministry position. Being away for fourteen weeks is a new experience for me! It feels like a great practice in trust – trusting in the shared nature of our ministry together and trusting you all to continue that good ministry over these next few months while I am gone. And as I prepare for this time of leave, I feel comforted by the full and deep sense of trust I do feel in you, the SWUU community! There is no doubt in my mind or in my heart that this beloved church and our ministry together is in great hands with all of you!

I want to take this opportunity to share with you some of the resources that you have available with each other during my leave. If you need to reach out to any of the lay leaders listed below, their contact information can be found in our church directory.

### **Worship**

#### *Worship Team and Guest Preachers*

Our Worship Team has put together a full and wonderful schedule of Sunday morning worship services from now through June! These services will be led by a mix of seasoned preachers, as well as lay leaders from our own congregation.

While I am away, Deb Celinski will be stepping up to lead our worship team. Many of you may know that Deb has entered the UU Commissioned Lay Minister program and worship is one of her areas of focus in that program!

### **Pastoral Care**

#### *Care Team and Rev. Mary Grigolia*

Our congregation’s Care Team is a great resource in our congregation, if you find yourself in need of caring connection. Care Team members include: Gayle Doucette, Bruce Melville, Rae Brewer, Nellie Van Roden, Hallie Davis, and Sylvia Banks.

If you would like pastoral care from a minister during this time of leave, Rev. Mary Grigolia will be on call to provide pastoral care as needed. Rev. Mary is a local retired minister who is very experienced in providing pastoral care. She was also SWUU’s minister for a time back in the 1990s! We will share Rev. Mary’s contact information with you in our Thursday E-News, in our announcements, and on the SWUUList. Our church office and members of our Care Team can also connect you with her if needed.

### **Decision-Making**

#### *Board of Trustees*

Our church Board is the resource to turn to for guidance on how decisions are made in the life of the church and matters of church oversight. Our current Board is: Rae Brewer (President), Adrienne Ellis (VP), Steve Doucette (Treasurer), Dan Paxson, Sue Wraight, Jan Wehn, and Katie Maslar.

### **Matters of Covenant and Conflict**

#### *Shared Ministry Team*

If any conflict or potential conflict arises, or if you have concerns around behavior that is not aligned with our church’s covenant, please reach out to someone on our Shared Ministry Team. This team is: Mike Gold, Sarajane Willson, Pat Woodside, and Ken Ellis.

Beloveds, as this time of leave approaches, if you have any questions or concerns, I hope you will reach to myself, to someone on our board, or to any of the leaders listed above.

And in these next few months, may you feel especially held by the shared ministry of this congregation, trusting in the wisdom and care that exists in community.

I am very much looking forward to returning to you all in June and bringing along a new little member of our SWUU community!

With love and gratitude,

Rev. Ali

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## **Focus Collection for March: Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio** by Nancy Peltola, Social Justice Committee

SWUU has a long history of supporting Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio, whose mission is to “deliver innovative health care, education, and advocacy no matter what.” They provide essential reproductive health care services to generations of Ohioans. Their services are designed to help people make informed choices that focus on responsibility, prevention of unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, and reproductive cancers.

Reproductive rights are protected in Ohio! Passing of Issue 1 confirmed that the majority of Ohioans support abortion access. PPGO has 13 health centers and two surgery centers throughout North, East, and Central Ohio, plus a community pharmacy and Virtual Health Center. In these politically charged times, Planned Parenthood steadfastly remains at the forefront of lifelong sexuality education and health care. Donations can be made by check (write PPGO on memo line) and put in the offering basket all month or mailed to the church. You may also use the Vanco Give Plus app. Thank you for your generosity.

## **Urban Hope Update** by Jan Wehn, Social Justice Committee

Happy to report that our day at Urban Hope was a success. Dan and Susan Paxson and Gayle and Steve Doucette joined me for the afternoon.

Because of all the donations, we were able to treat buying Fried Chicken from Giant Eagle. It was a hit. We also had macaroni Salad, a beautiful tossed salad, clementines, peaches, chips, pretzels, crackers and bars. Plus, we treated everyone to beautiful homemade desserts. It was satisfying to hear that people were full! Plus, we had enough T-shirts, Underwear, Socks and Hats, and so no one went away without their requests. The only thing we didn't have were gloves. Although there was an early incident with some shouting, the remainder of the day was pleasant, and the mood was positive. Next month we go on March 9. So far Nancy and Denny Peltola and Mick Stentz and I will be going!

Thank you for all of the donations!

## **UU 101 and SWUU 101** by Susan Paxson, Membership Committee

We at SWUU are so pleased to see 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 usually offer a series of two classes for people who might be new to UU or new to our congregation.

We are reaching out to see if there are folks who might be interested in these classes this spring. Usually, our classes are facilitated by the minister, but since Rev Ali will be out with her baby this spring, the Membership Committee could facilitate them. If you would prefer to wait until Rev Ali is available, then you can always wait until the fall when she is available! Please reach out to one of our committee members to let us know your thoughts. We are Lydia Avery, Carol Jordan, Dodi Lettus, Susan Paxson, Sherry Spencer, and Kimberly Vincent.

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## NATIONAL ECONOMIC BLACKOUT DAY

by Carol Thombs

The National Economic Blackout, scheduled for February 28, 2025, is a powerful call to action aimed at protesting recent rollbacks of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies by major corporations. The primary goal is to demonstrate the significant economic influence of marginalized communities by abstaining from all non-essential spending for 24 hours, beginning at 12 a.m.

### What is being asked of you?

- Do not spend money: Refrain from making any purchases, both in-store and online, on February 28.
- Support local businesses: If you must make essential purchases, prioritize small, local, and minority-owned businesses.
- Spread the word: Encourage friends, family, and your community to participate and raise awareness about the blackout.

### Origins and Supporters

The initiative was launched by the People's Union in response to corporations scaling back DEI programs. The League of Women Voters is promoting this through social media.

### Why Your Participation Matters

Collective economic actions have historically been effective in prompting change. By uniting in this blackout, we send a clear message to corporations about the importance of DEI initiatives and the economic power of marginalized communities. This single day of economic action may be followed by a 3 day economic event or even actions against certain companies..

Our position as SWUU members is to promote diversity, equity and inclusion. Inclusion was the focus of our church service both by Carolyn Stevens' story and by the reflection and activity by SaraJane Wilson and Deb Celinski on February 23. Let's take action and follow their lead.

No Justice, No Dollars –  
Our Money, Our Power!

**ECONOMIC BLACKOUT**  
FRIDAY FEB. 28, 2025 12AM-11:59PM  
OUR FIRST OFFICIAL ACT:  
"TURN IT OFF"

- For one day we show them who really holds the power.

WHAT NOT TO DO:

- Do not make any purchases. ▪ Do not shop online, or in-store
- No Amazon ▪ No Walmart ▪ No Best Buy Nowhere!
- No McDonalds

DO NOT SPEND MONEY ON FOOD:

- Fast Food ▪ Gas ▪ Major Retailers

Do not use Credit or Debit Cards for non essential spending.

WHAT YOU CAN DO IF NECESSARY:

- Only buy essentials of absolutely necessary items such as (Food, Medicine, Emergency Supplies)
- If you must spend, ONLY support small, local businesses.

SPREAD THE MESSAGE:

- Talk about it. ▪ Post about it. ▪ Document your actions that day!

WHY THIS MATTERS:

- Corporations and banks only care about their bottom line.
- If we disrupt the economy for just ONE day, it sends a powerful message.
- If they don't listen we make the next blackout longer.
- This is our first action. ▪ Our numbers are powerful.
- This is how we make history.

SHARE THIS MESSAGE

# 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](mailto: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 1<sup>st</sup> day of each month. Submissions should be sent to [forum@swuu.org](mailto: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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:office@swuu.org)

### Board Minutes

If you would like to receive the Board Minutes via email, contact [office@swuu.org](mailto:office@swuu.org), and put "Board Minutes" in the subject line

### Editorial Team

Dan Paxson  
Susan Paxson

# The Forum

## **Safety at SWUU**

By Adrienne Ellis (on behalf of the SWUU Board)

In light of the current political landscape and recent executive orders targeting immigrants, the LGBTQ+ community, and organizations that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as concerns from congregants, the SWUU Board has been discussing safety and wanted to share the following information and opportunity:

### **Feeling nervous about what to do if ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) shows up at church?**

At this time, we do not believe there is much of a risk of ICE showing up at SWUU, but wanted to share the below information to empower you all. If ICE does show up, get or call Rev. Ali (or the minister on-call while she is on leave) and/or a Board member immediately. We cannot prevent ICE from entering our building. However, **they are only allowed in private portions of the building if they have a warrant signed by a judge.** Furthermore, we recommend that you do not talk to them. We are putting up "private area" signs in the back office, which they are **not** allowed to access. Feel free to check out [this great resource from the UUA](#) for more information.

### **Interested in discussing church safety?**

The SWUU Board will be hosting an informal **Safety Town Hall** after church (~noon) next **Sunday, March 2**. We will have some training materials prepared from the UUA to watch together, then open up for dialogue regarding what safety concerns are on people's minds, and how we can move forward feeling more resilient during uncertain times. Pull up a chair to learn together, share ideas, and alleviate some of our worries.

As always, you can reach out to Rev. Ali or a Board member with questions or concerns.

## **Save the Date for a Vegetarian/Vegan Potluck to Celebrate Earth Day!**

**Sunday, April 6, 2025**

**Immediately after church in the Fellowship Hall**

Please bring your own table settings and a list of ingredients for your potluck item.

This is also a great time to share and swap your favorite vegetarian and vegan recipes!

After the meal, Carol Thombs will lead an educational session on how plant-based proteins benefit the environment.



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### **SWUUC is Renewing its Commitment as a Welcoming Congregation**

by Lydia Avery, Membership Committee

As a congregation, SWUU became a Welcoming Congregation in 1997. It was a long, reflective process of about three years, that included a super majority vote to pass. We were and are so proud of our commitment to being a Welcoming Congregation which means that all sexual orientations and gender identities are welcome at SWUU.

A few years ago, the UUA nudged congregations to renew their Welcoming Congregation commitment. The goal was and is this: “to honor your original pledge, it’s essential that new people in the congregation (as well as people who were originally involved in the program) understand your congregation’s commitment to this work and learn about the current needs and concerns of LGBTQ+ people.” As such, the UUA laid out The Five Practices of Welcome Renewal.

1. Becoming a Welcoming Congregation
2. Welcoming Worship Services
3. Welcoming Days of Observance
4. Welcoming Religious Education
5. Supporting a Welcoming Project

It is clear that we are well on our way to this renewal of our commitment. There are several links to various options for each of these practices. We welcome you to check out the UUA website at <https://www.uua.org/lgbtq/welcoming/program/five-practices-welcome-renewal> for a plethora of ideas, programs, etc.

We welcome other’s involvement in this all important ministry of our faith community! Won’t you please join us by reaching out to one of the following members of the Membership Committee? Susan Paxson, Sherry Spencer, Carol Jordan, Kimberly Vincent or Lydia Avery. Thank you for considering this!

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## Sharing and Caring

**Cynthia Mondia** is home from the hospital and glad to be able to come to our services and other activities.

*\*Please send your joys and sorrows to [forum@swuu.org](mailto:forum@swuu.org) for inclusion in the next issue.*

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