



# Community Matters

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest Michigan September 2018

## **September Services**

*Services and Children's Religious Education Classes begin at 10:00am. Nursery Care is available.*

**Sunday, September 2nd - Tanequa Hampton & Kristin Smith of Gryphon Place will be speaking on "Suicide Prevention Basics"**

This talk will cover the basic signs present in individuals contemplating suicide, what to do if you or someone suspects that an individual is contemplating suicide, and ways to obtain more information to become suicide safer.

**Sunday, September 9th - Rev. Gy Ludvig-McCartney will be facilitating our annual Water Communion**

Please bring with you to this intergenerational service a bit of water from your summer travels or from places special to you.

**Sunday, September 16th - Rev. Alicia Johnston will be speaking about "A Story of Inclusion"**

Alicia will be sharing her story of transformation from a religiously conservative and closeted queer person to a more expansive and affirming spirituality. Along the way will be lessons learned about compassion, inclusion, and the importance of working for equality.

**Sunday, September 23rd - Fred Stella will be speaking on "I Think I'm a Hindunitarian"**

He will examine the relationship between the Unitarian Universalists and the growth of Hinduism in the US since the middle of the 19th century through today.

**Sunday, September 30th - Eric Nelson will be speaking on "Cultivating Sustainable Happiness"**

In our service you will experience effortless mindfulness practices that you can use during your day anytime you feel distracted, emotionally out of balance or caught up in habitual ways of thinking and acting. Research has shown these practices to be beneficial to our overall health and well-being.



### **From the Minister**

Rev. Gy Ludvig Mc-Cartney

*"It is not my ideology that we should constantly evolve and transform. It is the way of existence."*

~ Sadhguru

When I think of our spiritual community, I am mostly consumed with one thought: growth. It is my hope and wish that we grow in depth, character, and numbers. I don't want growth for the sake of growth, I seek it because it is the way of a healthy organism.

In order to facilitate growth, we established the Strategic Planning Team (Mission: Inspirational) and we've come up with some healthy goals. Now it's time for implementation.

Implementation equals change. Change can equal discomfort, pain, excitement, a plethora of feelings. How do we best navigate times like this?

I think communication is paramount. It has to go both ways. Teams communicate with the body the changes that are in the works, and the rest of us get to offer feedback. It is my hope and wish that feedback is constructive, kind, thoughtful, and patient. I think patience is so important, because often we just don't know.

Allow me to indulge you in a story.

I tend to be a very frugal person. I never have more than one pair of shoes. I mean, I never have more than one pair of the same type of shoes. So, as long as what I have look like shoes, feel like shoes, I do not go shoe shopping. Not because I don't covet new shoes, but because I feel that it is an unnecessary expense and what I have is good enough.

*(Continued on page 2)*

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In April my replaced knee started really hurting. I mean, really! It got so bad that I just didn't want to take the next step anymore. It literally felt like I was walking on a raw stump. I went back to the surgeon, had all sorts of tests done, and no structural problems could be discovered. A mystery.

Fast forward to August. Patti and I were downtown and V&A Bootery was having a sidewalk sale. We looked around and I tried on a pair of sandals. They felt really comfortable, but I already had a pair of sandals (I was wearing them at the time), so I didn't feel justified to buy another pair. Patti, however, talked me into buying these. I put them on right away and left the store wearing them. When bedtime came it occurred to me that something was different. At first I couldn't quite figure out what it was and then I realized: my knee was barely hurting!! What? How is that possible? Then I figured it out: it was the new sandals. And the next day when I wore them the pain was less again. It worked repeatedly.

I pitched the old sandals even though they still looked like sandals. They just didn't serve me well anymore and I was the last one to know.

On a side note: I am going to retire most of my footwear and replace it with new. For my own sake.

So, please, have patience with the changes, because sometimes we just don't know. We just don't know that the old "tried and true" just isn't serving us well enough anymore.

When the changes are implemented, give it some time before you decide that you hate it, don't like it, don't think it's necessary, etc. Maybe, just maybe, it will grow on you. Sometimes we are the last ones to know.

And in the meantime, let's talk. I am willing and available to meet with you just about any time. We can grab coffee, lunch, dinner, your choice. If there is something on your heart, I would love to know about it.

We're in this together. We can navigate these changing times. It is my hope and wish that we will emerge on the other side together, stronger, wiser, full of life.

*To become a butterfly, metamorphosis is necessary. If the caterpillar never went through this process of change, it would never achieve its great destiny and become its most glorious self.*

~ Michelle 'Chaella' Boddie



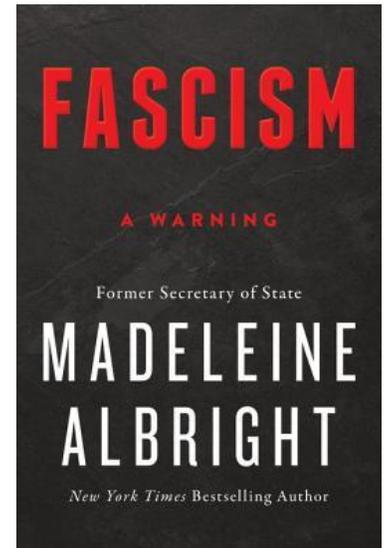
## Women's Book Group - September

### "Fascism - A Warning" by Madeline Albright

The UUCC Women's Book Group's first meeting of the fall will be Friday, September 14: Lunch at [Cove Lakeside Bistro](#) at 11:30 am., followed by dessert and discussion at 1:00 pm at the church.

The book we'll be discussing is "Fascism - A Warning" by Madeline Albright, former US Secretary of State. You may read more about this book online at [Goodreads](#).

All UUCC women are welcome to attend. Contact Betty Lee Ongley at [bongley@charter.net](mailto:bongley@charter.net) for lunch reservations.



## September Calendar

<p><b>Every Sunday, September 2, 9, 16, 23 &amp; 30</b> 10:00 am - Sunday Service with childcare &amp; R.E., classes</p>	<p><b>Every Wednesday, September 5, 12, 19, &amp; 26</b> 6:30 pm - Choir Rehearsal</p>
<p><b>Monday, September 3rd</b> Labor Day</p>	<p><b>Friday, September 7th</b> 6:00 pm - R.E. Parent Orientation</p>
<p><b>Sunday, September 9th</b> 11:30 am - Faith in Action Meeting 11:30 am - Connections Team Meeting</p>	<p><b>Wednesday, September 12th</b> 12:15 pm - Stewardship Meeting 5:30 pm - Sunday Celebrations Meeting 7:00 pm - Mission: Inspirational Meeting</p>
<p><b>Thursday, September 13th</b> 5:30 pm - Board Meeting</p>	<p><b>Thursday, September 14th</b> 11:30 - Women's Book Group Lunch 1:00 pm - Women's Book Group Discussion</p>
<p><b>Saturday, September 15th</b> 8:30 am - Men's Breakfast @ Burger Town</p>	<p><b>Sunday, September 16th</b> 11:30 am - Program Council Meeting</p>
<p><b>Wednesday, September 19th</b> 5:00 pm - October Newsletter Deadline 6:30 pm - UUCC Film Forum</p>	<p><b>Sunday, September 23rd</b> 11:30 am - R.E. Committee Meeting</p>

## R.E.flections

**Jacquis Robertson**  
**Director of**  
**Religious Education**



*“The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new.” – Socrates*

September, the month where church truly starts: Everyone is back from vacation, and we celebrate the end of summer vacation and the start of fall with “Water Communion” (on Sunday, September 9) it is indeed my favorite time of year! This fall will be full of beautiful changes made to Religious Education!

In August, the focus of Religious Education was the R.E. space, making it a place the children and youth want to be (it is their program, after all). We brainstormed some modifications that could be made to the R.E. and, while flat screen televisions and a pet fish made the list, the top three that we will focus on are: Providing the R.E. space with hammocks, AstroTurf (yes AstroTurf), and an indoor treehouse. The hammock is first. The children are going to have various fundraisers to fund these projects, so look for those this month and in the months to come. I genuinely encourage you to give anyway that you can. I have promised the youth that I will match any donations they get up to \$200.

In September, we will also have a Parent Orientation. It will be just one hour and cover a little more in-depth what will be taking place in R.E. this church year as well as how you can support the R.E. program. While this orientation is geared to parents, it’s for anyone who would like

more information about the Religious Education program. Light refreshments will be provided.

I am excited for this church year; that’s something I say every year and with the utmost sincerity. Every year I get to understand better the young people in our community, aid in helping them realize what’s important to them, and gain an understanding as to what truly brings me the most joy. I am honored to work with these young people and honored to serve this community. This year will be fantastic. I hope you’re as excited for this year as I am! As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please don’t hesitate to reach out!

### **Parent Orientation:**

If you are a parent or someone who would just like to know more about Religious Education, our Annual Parent Orientation meeting will be held **Friday, September 7, 2018, from 6 to 7 p.m.** Light refreshments will be provided.

### **Religious Education Committee:**

Our first Religious Education Committee meeting will be held Sunday, September 23, 2018, from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

### **R.E. Retreat:**

We will be holding our first R.E. Retreat (formally the R.E. Sleepover) October 12 through October 13. More information to come.

### **Religious Education Weekly E-Newsletter:**

If you are not receiving the Religious Education weekly e-newsletter and would like to please e-mail me at [Jacquis.o.robertson@gmail.com](mailto:Jacquis.o.robertson@gmail.com).

## September R.E. Schedule

### Nursery Volunteers

Please contact Jacquis at [jacquis.o.robertson@gmail.com](mailto:jacquis.o.robertson@gmail.com) if you would like to volunteer to hang out with our littlest UUCC people.

Dates	Lesson	Teacher
9/2	“How to Save a Life”	Jacquis Robertson
9/9	“Water Communion”	Intergenerational
9/16	“Letter to Self”	Jacquis Robertson
9/23	“Work Sunday”	Jacquis Robertson
9/23	“UUer”	Jacquis Robertson

UUCC’s **Religious Education Curriculum** is available in digital format. If you would like to have a digital copy of the lessons, please e-mail me at [jacquis.o.robertson@gmail.com](mailto:jacquis.o.robertson@gmail.com). Your participation, your questions and your suggestions are most welcome.

For those in our congregation who are new to volunteering as a Religious Education teacher, a **R.E. Teacher Check List** is available; this provides the appropriate details, and will give you an understanding of the routine.

For our best communication, please talk with me on Sunday and also send an e-mail to me at [jacquis.o.robertson@gmail.com](mailto:jacquis.o.robertson@gmail.com)

Our children need the participation of our adults, so thank you for considering this vital role.



## FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

In 1970, I left the Roman Catholic Church and joined the Unitarian Universalist faith. The principles, values, absence of dogmas, and an opportunity to search for the truth with an open mind called me. In short, I loved the big picture. The services, however, were another matter. They were simply to be endured as I waited to hear the speaker. I tolerated and was usually bored with most of the other elements of the Sunday Service. Honestly, I thought the “order of service” was written in stone. Not because it was actually written in stone, but because everyone (but me) wanted it that way. But I never asked anyone. I just assumed.

Then, last fall, UUCU embarked on a great journey. The congregation spent a Saturday drafting what eventually became our Vision and Mission. But we didn’t stop there. A team of members met at least twice a month for six months to craft our Strategic Plan, our “Mission Inspirational”.

When we were in Kansas City for the General Assembly this past summer, I read that Plan. My soul caught fire! This plan hit the nail on the head! This plan was like looking back at all those pages of notes from that Saturday the previous fall. The voice from the congregation was shouting through loud and clear.

So, okay. That’s nice. But back to Sunday Services. Back to same ol’ same ol’. Right? WRONG! My true expectation was that NOTHING would change, at least not for a long, long time. Back to the same habit. Back into the same rut.

Then I read that the children didn’t like the “story for all ages” and they said so! Hurrah for them! And we listened and agreed. Hurrah for us! Gone from Sunday Service was Story for all Ages. I NEVER, ever thought that would happen in my lifetime. That’s what listening does. Listening to those who care the most. Kudos to adults who listen to children.

Then a group of creative souls got together. Inspired by our Vision, Mission and Strategic Plan they unwrapped and tore open the Sunday Service package. Once open, they pulled it apart and put it all back together with fresh paper and ribbons. It’s the same message but it’s no longer a Sunday Service. It’s a Sunday CELEBRATION! And I just figured out what bothered me about Sunday Services all those 48 years and it’s this.

We are different. We are unique so Sunday should also be unique. I wanted something more than the typical church with its routine humdrum. I wanted the Sunday Service to be a Unitarian Universalist inspiration from beginning to end. Not just the sermon. I needed it to flow. Lift my spirit, challenge my mind, feed my soul. All of it, not just what the minister or speaker said. And that’s how I’m experiencing the change brought to us by these creative minds.

Thank you Sunday Celebrations, Sunday Services Committees and Mission Inspirational. I can hear the birds singing as we flow along on this river of doubt, searching for our individual truths. While there are still challenges facing us on this river of doubt, we are at least flowing in the right direction and we will, as a community, deal with those challenges.

Marsha Laya  
[marshalaya@gmail.com](mailto:marshalaya@gmail.com)



UCC's annual service auction is scheduled for **Friday, October 26**. Mark your calendars now, so you don't miss out on this traditional evening of food, fun and fundraising for our Church. We'll gather at 5:30 p.m. to look over the silent auction offerings and enjoy some social time. Our indoor "Tailgate Party" with Rev. Gy as grill-master will start at 6:00 (\$10 suggested donation for food) followed by the live auction at 6:45. Watch the weekly emails for donation ideas and further details.

## **Board Briefs**

**Regular Meeting: August 8, 2018**

**From Marsha Laya**

The following actions were taken by the Board of Trustees at the August 8th meeting:

- To implement electronic methods of deposit/payment. This would allow donations/payment for classes or products to be made electronically via credit card, Apple Pay, Google Pay or other means of widely used electronic means.
- Set the Agenda for the Board Retreat to be held September 29th.
- Received a thorough explanation of the Strategic Plan "Mission Inspirational" by Erin Michael and Nancy Calme in preparation for the Board Retreat which they will be attending.
- Gave Rev. Gy the authority to make decisions about staff requests. Most recently the request of the DRE to have one Sunday a month off so she can attend services with the adults.
- Supported a Grant Proposal to the Michigan Council for the Arts for seed funding to hold a play entitled "Native Garden" at UCC.
- Accepted the resignation of Board Member Joyce Van Baak and discussed the options for filling that vacancy.



## September Sunday Service Details

**Sunday, September 2nd, Tanequa Hampton & Kristen Smith of Gryphon Place will be speaking on the "Suicide Prevention Basics"**

September is National Suicide Prevention Month. Tanequa Hampton of Gryphon Place and Kristen Smith, a safeTALK trainer, will speak with us about the basic signs present in individuals contemplating suicide, what to do if you or someone suspects that an individual is contemplating suicide, and ways to obtain more information to become suicide safer.



Tanequa Hampton is the Suicide Prevention Program Manager at Gryphon Place. She oversees the Gatekeeper Program (suicide prevention education for middle and high school students) as well as the crisis intervention lines. She is also a certified Question, Persuade, Refer facilitator for adults interested in learning how to help individuals at risk.

Kristen Smith is a licensed clinical social worker, trained in assessing and managing suicide risk. Kristen is a safeTALK trainer, which is suicide alertness for everyone. Tanequa and Kristen work together to oversee suicide prevention/intervention/postvention programs in Kalamazoo County.



Please visit the Gryphon Place website for information about [Suicide Prevention Month events](#) sponsored by Gryphon Place.

**Sunday, September 9th, Rev. Gy will be leading our annual Water Communion**



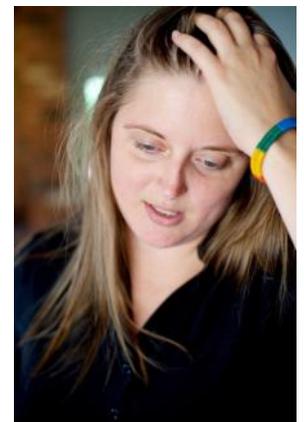
Please bring with you to the service a bit of water from your summer travels or from places special to you so we can join our waters together at our UUC home. This will be an intergenerational service, and all ages are welcome!

Read more about the tradition of celebrating the [UU Water Communion](#) and [how and why it was created](#).

**Sunday, September 16th, Alicia Johnston will be speaking about "A Story of Inclusion"**

Rev. Alicia Johnston will be speaking on "A Story of Inclusion." Alicia will be sharing her story of transformation from a religiously conservative and closeted queer person to a more expansive and affirming spirituality. Along the way will be lessons learned about compassion, inclusion, and the importance of working for equality.

Alicia Johnston grew up in a conservative Christian denomination, the Seventh-day Adventist Church. She was fully dedicated to her denomination, attending Adventist schools and centering her life around the church. Feeling the call of God, she eventually became a minister. After



years of struggle with the church's teaching about LGBT+ sexuality and gender as well as her own sexuality, she announced via a viral video that she is fully inclusive and affirming, and that she is a bisexual Christian. The announcement resulted in a forced resignation from her church and the loss of her career as an Adventist pastor. Her story was covered by [NBC](#), [LGBTQ Nation](#), [Auto Straddle](#), and [Religion News](#). Still, Alicia describes her life now as full of joy, harmony, and purpose and she wouldn't change a thing. Alicia speaks and writes about her story, queer insights on faith, and the intersection of Christianity and sexuality. She has a master of divinity from Andrews University in Berrien Springs, MI and a master of arts in Clinical Psychology from Argosy University in Phoenix, AZ. She can be found at [aliciajohnston.com](http://aliciajohnston.com).

### **Sunday, September 23rd, Fred Stella will be speaking on "I Think I'm a Hindunitarian"**

He will examine the relationship between the Unitarian Universalists and the growth of Hinduism in the US since the middle of the 19th century through today. The growth of Hinduism in America was aided greatly by the leadership of the Unitarian Church in the latter part of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. Still today, Unitarian Universalists are known to Hindus as great allies, sharing a commitment to pluralism, religious liberty, freedom of thought and a disdain of dogma.

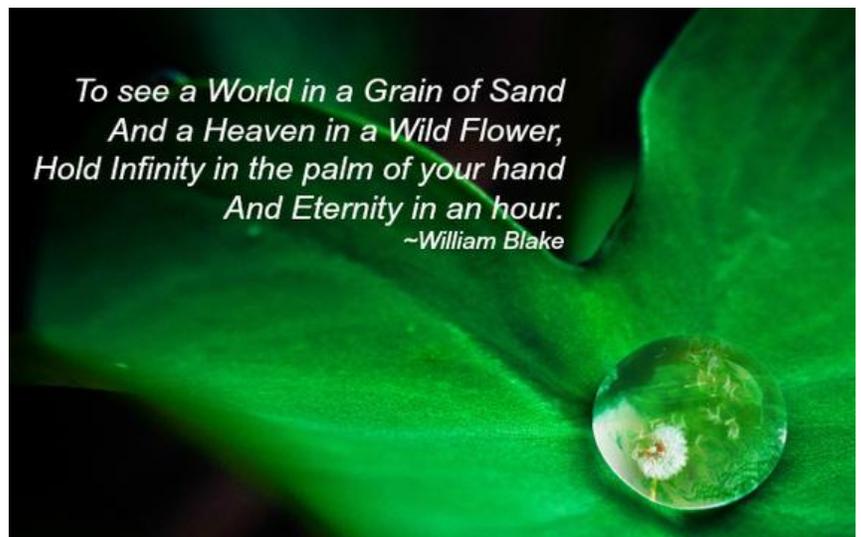


### **Sunday, September 30th, Eric Nelson will be speaking on "Cultivating Sustainable Happiness"**

Sustainable Happiness is possible and can be cultivated through effortless mindfulness practices, described as: The letting go of attention, thought and present moments, in order to open to our already awake awareness that is naturally focused, compassionate and non-conceptually intelligent in the Now.

In our service you will experience effortless mindfulness practices that you can use during your day anytime you feel distracted, emotionally out of balance or caught up in habitual ways of thinking and acting. Research has show these practices to be beneficial to our overall health and well- being.

Please visit Eric's website at [stressmanagementsolutions.us](http://stressmanagementsolutions.us) for information about classes and courses on mindfulness and compassion. Stress Management Solutions provides mindfulness and compassion classes in the Kalamazoo region to help individuals improve health, well-being and interpersonal harmony.



## Mission: Inspirational

In the 2017-2018 church year, UUCC's Strategic Planning Task Force used the congregation's vision and mission to create an initial set of one-year goals and a process for working together. Now that we've begun the new church year, it is time for all operational groups to develop their own projects to support those goals.

Take the Connections Team as an example.

This team has a mission of *welcoming* everyone, *connecting* people, and *streamlining* our processes to make sure they really work. This year, we will look through the eyes of our team's mission to pick out ways we can help achieve the church's goals. For example, goal number one involves developing a facility assessment. Perhaps the Connections team could offer ideas for how to use our space better for sharing congregation news and relaxed and friendly sharing after the service on Sundays.

Goal number four is to hold four evening fun celebrations this year, with at least half of them being family-friendly. The Connections Team might volunteer to organize one or two of these, as a way of building friendships among people who don't normally have time together. What better way to do our part to help UUCC achieve its strategic goals?

Members of the Mission: Inspirational Task Force will help each operational group develop and track their projects towards the church's goals, so you aren't going to have to go it alone. Let's see if we can make some headway right out of the starting box.

*The Mission: Inspirational Task Force*



## VOLUNTEER HELP WANTED

UUCC works as a special faith community because we engage with each other, making possible any number of activities that all help to make this a better world. Are you looking to help, or are you looking for helpers?

Here's a brief list of some of the current opportunities for volunteers and the contact person:

- **Coffee Hour** - Denise Sonier
- **Library** - Brian Leekley
- **Religious Education** - Jacquis Robertson
- **Greeters and Folks to Be at Tables for Sunday Service** - Nancy Crowell



## Connections Team Update

A new church year begins, and the Connections Team is eyeing new ways to make everyone feel instantly welcome when they walk through the door and to easily build warm relationships with others in the congregation. Is this important to you? Working in the Connections Team is a great entry-level group for getting to know names and faces, finding out how things work at UUCC, and encountering enthusiasm and support for your ideas.

We are developing a new schedule under which we will meet six times a year to check in on how our efforts are working, play with new ideas, and enjoy each other's company. Why don't you join us? Contact Nancy at [nancy.calme@gmail.com](mailto:nancy.calme@gmail.com) or 269-271-8851.



## September Caring Community Update

Due to busy summertime schedules, we will need to wait with bated breath for our Caring Community update in October to fill us in on all this busy-ness we've been up to. Welcome to fall, which so often feels like a time for change and new beginnings as the school year starts up again.

For now, in referencing last year's September newsletter, we recognized a few birthdays and anniversaries, and hopefully all are included here! **Jane Curtin** on the 3rd, **Tony Ettwein** on the 8th, **Bill Boyer** on the 14th, **Sam Ettwein** on the 16th, **Molly Ettwein** on the Sept. 18th, and **John Folz** on the 29th. Happy and Healthy wishes for a wonderful year.

Also, congratulations to **Beverly and John Folz** who will be celebrating their 55th wedding anniversary on September 14!



**UU Community Church  
is served by:**

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**2018-2019 Board of Trustees**

Marsha Laya  
Phil Najar  
Betty Lee Ongley  
Mary Roscoe  
Joyce Van Baak

**The next Newsletter Deadline is  
Wednesday, September 19th at 5:00 pm**  
Send Submissions to:  
[uccnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:uccnewsletter@gmail.com)

**Community Matters**

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