



Community Matters



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

December Services

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

Sunday, December 2nd - "C'mon and Celebrate!" with Rev. Gy and our other UUCS team members.

Please join us as we look back on this past year and celebrate all we've done. This is going to be a collaborative talk including all the team leaders. We look forward to sharing together. We will also be decorating our church after the service. There will be NO potluck today, but snacks and coffee will be available during decorating time.

Sunday, December 9th - "Songs and Stories from the Trail of Life" with guest speaker Steve Barber

The traditions we share with our friends and family provide a path that begins at periodic trail heads where our adventures are regularly repeated. Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Christmas, and the Festival of Lights are a few of the trail heads where the adventures begin. We learn who we are and what we are expected to do as we travel these shared paths. Steve Barber will share stories and songs that will help us recall seasonal gatherings and how we have all enjoyed our different roles in these adventures through our lives as young children, older children, adults, and Elders, those who have traveled the path and are now relied upon to share the meaning of the travels and traditions.

Sunday, December 16th - Rev. Gy will be sharing with us this morning.

Please check weekly emails for information about her topic. We welcome you with us, as always.

Sunday, December 23rd - No Service

Sunday, December 24th - Christmas Eve Service in connection with People's Church

See page 2 for more information on our joint UU celebration of the season!

Sunday, December 30th - "Burning Bowl" with Rev. Gy

With the dusk of the old year, we are going to release all those emotional ties and bonds that no longer serve us. We are going to give them over to the flames and like the phoenix bird, from the ashes we emerge anew.



From the Minister

Rev. Gy Ludvig Mc-Cartney

"Enough is a feast."

– Buddhist proverb

The New Year is just around the corner and I naturally tend to reflect upon the past year. If I'd have to summarize with one word all that we've done, it would be: honesty.

We took an honest look at who we are, who we've been, where we are and where we wish to go together as a community.

Honesty is not easy and too often is the road less traveled. We, however, chose this path.

We found that we have a strong and beautiful foundation upon which we can build our version of tomorrow. We are clear that our message is worthy of sharing, our principles are worth living by, our values are life giving.

As a minister, I naturally want us to grow. I dream of us growing into a large, powerful, beautiful oak tree. I dream of contributing in meaningful ways to our larger community.

My dream might come true. That secret is guarded by tomorrow.

Today we are a bonsai tree. A beautiful, perfect bonsai tree. Perhaps it is our destiny to remain a bonsai. That secret is also guarded by tomorrow.

In any case, my hope and wish is that whatever we are or are to become, that we be a healthy, caring, principled community who practice and model integrity, compassion, and love. Oak or bonsai.

I am grateful for belonging here. I am grateful that I get to walk this path alongside you all, that I get to live honestly.

This is enough. On this I feast.



Christmas Eve

— SERVICE —

Sunday, December 24th, 6:30 pm
Unitarian Universalist Community Church
10441 Shaver Road, Portage

Please allow us to cordially invite you to our Christmas Eve Service. We are delighted to be once again celebrating together with People's Church.

We are going to walk you through different cultures as they celebrate around this time of the year. Our joint choir will also delight you with inspired and inspiring performances, while we as a congregation will also have ample opportunities to sing our most favorite Christmas songs.

Please, allow afterwards for some time to fellowship and to share conversation, cookies, and warm beverages.

Kindly, Lovingly,
Rev. Gy Ludvig-McCartney and Rev. Rachel Longberg

NO DECEMBER POT LUCK: There will be no December potluck on **December 2nd**. We will use the time after services to decorate for the holiday. Please plan to stay and help beautify the church. There will be plenty to do, so many helpers will be needed. Bring a snack or finger food to share while we work, if you like.

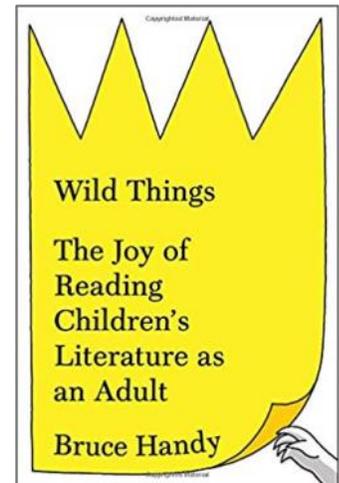


Women’s Book Group - December

Wild Things: The Joy of Reading Children’s Literature as an Adult by Bruce Handy

Betty Lee Ongley will host the UUCC Women’s Book Group’s annual holiday salad potluck starting at 11:30 am at her Portage home (address in church directory), followed by the book discussion. Women are encouraged to bring a favorite children’s book. All UUCC women are welcome.

“In Wild Things, Bruce Handy revisits the classics of every American childhood, from fairy tales to The Very Hungry Caterpillar, and explores the back stories of their creators, using context and biography to understand how some of the most insightful, creative, and witty authors and illustrators of their times created their often deeply personal masterpieces. Along the way, Handy learns what The Cat in the Hat says about anarchy and absentee parenting, which themes link The Runaway Bunny and Portnoy’s Complaint, and why Ramona Quimby is as true an American icon as Tom Sawyer or Jay Gatsby....” [\[read more\]](#)



December Calendar

| | |
|--|---|
| Sunday, December 2nd 10:00 am - “C’mon and Celebrate!” 11:30 am - Coffee, tea, snacks, & decorating! | Monday, December 3rd 6:00 - 8:00 pm - Christmas Choir Rehearsal |
| Tuesday, December 4th 1:00 - 3:00 pm - iPhone/iPad makeup class | Thursday, December 6th 6:00 pm - Round Table Discussion |
| Saturday, December 8th 3:00 - 5:00 pm - Christmas Choir Rehearsal | Sunday, December 9th 10:00 am - “Stories & Songs...” 11:30 am - Program Council Meeting |
| Tuesday, December 11th 6:00 - 8:00 pm - Christmas Choir Rehearsal | Wednesday, December 12th 12:15 pm - Stewardship Meeting 2:00 pm - Board Meeting 5:30 pm - Sunday Services Committee Meeting |
| Friday, December 14th 11:30 am - Women’s Book Group Holiday Salad Potluck and Book Discussion | Saturday, December 15th 8:30 am - Men’s Breakfast @ Burger Town Grille |
| Sunday, December 16th 10:00 am - Watch Friday emails for topic 11:30 am - Program Council Meeting | Wednesday, December 19th January (2019!) Newsletter Deadline |
| Saturday, December 22nd 3:00 - 5:00 pm - Christmas Choir Rehearsal | Monday, December 24th (no service 12/23) 6:30 pm @ UUCC - Christmas Eve Service with People’s Church UU |
| Friday & Saturday, December 28th & 29th Mindfulness Retreat @ UUCC - see upcoming Friday emails for more information | Sunday, December 30th 10:00 am - “Burning Bowl” |

R.E.flections

Jacquis Robertson
Director of
Religious Education



“Three passions, simple but overwhelmingly strong, have governed my life: the longing for love, the search for knowledge, and unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind .”

– Bertrand Russell

Here we are about to embark on a new year in T minus 31 days, yet with all the excitement in what this new year will bring, I am saddened to leave the incredible year that was 2018. In 2018, Religious Education saw a garden (that yielded vegetables, a stark growth from last year’s garden). We experienced the fun that is R.E. Sunday, a Sunday that we hadn’t held in two years. and it was a service that our youth planned from start to finish. We saw growth in Religious Education, and we have exceeded our attendance 15 out of the last 17 Sundays. We’ve seen new faces and a new energy around Religious Education that has brought pure joy to my heart.

However, the thing I’ve enjoyed most about this year is to experience the children’s growth. This year they took ownership over Religious Education, the fundraisers, the renovations, all things they chose and they planned. Often people think that Religious Education centers around the Director of Religious Education, but that is not true. My job is to implement the ideas of the children

and the parents; to make the dreams of the youth something that can come into fruition and shape the views of the parents, something the youth would like or enjoy. I am merely a conduit to the children cultivating their belief system; it has really been something to be able to adequately serve in that role this year and watch as our young people cultivate their belief system. Systems riddled with the love for animals and the respect for all existence, and the understanding that living your truth is way more important than just proclaiming it.

We’re here about to embark on 2019, and I’m so excited for what that will bring for UCC!

Christmas Items: We’re currently collecting items to be taken to the Portage Community Center for Christmas. Items can be put in the box in the foyer.

Thank you: A big THANK YOU to the Idy, Judson and Bryan for volunteering to work the nursery and teach R.E. in my absence I truly appreciate it.

R.E. E-Newsletter: If you don’t already receive the R.E. e-newsletter and would like to, please e-mail me at Jacquis.o.robertson@gmail.com.



December R.E. Schedule

Nursery Volunteers

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

| Dates | Lesson | Teacher |
|--------------|---|-------------------|
| 12/3 | <i>Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything.</i> | Jacquis Robertson |
| 12/10 | <i>Acceptance</i> | Jacquis Robertson |
| 12/17 | <i>UUer</i> | Jacquis Robertson |
| 12/23 | No church service today | |
| 12/24 | <i>Christmas Eve Service</i> | Intergenerational |
| 12/30 | <i>New Year's Resolution</i> | 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. 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 list 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 .

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



'Tis the Season

by Marsha Laya, President

Memories of Christmas from childhood are joyous. Christmas meant our extended family gathered. Gifts were shared. Food was abundant. Lights and decorations glittered. Anticipation was almost unbearable and, best of all, there was vacation from school.

Christmas follows Advent. In the Catholic convent, Advent was a time of extreme contemplativeness which was in sharp contrast to the extreme anticipation experienced in childhood. There was no mail or phone calls from family, no TV or radio, no newspapers or magazines, no secular books or reading, no shopping, and no Christmas music or decorations of any kind. We spent more time in prayer and reflection during Advent. The chapel was draped in purple and it was as though the entire convent was also draped in purple as we moved about in silent meditation. We became quiet both inside and outside. Even me.

On Christmas eve, we were given lighted candles and we walked the halls of the Motherhouse singing carols in 3-part harmony for the older retired sisters. It was a choir of angles! We paraded with our candles into the chapel for mid-night mass. The chapel was adorned in red poinsettias. The priest's vestments and altar boys' cassocks were no longer somber but exploded in color. The chapel was filled with all the sisters as well as all the people living in the vicinity of the Motherhouse. There was standing room only! The novices and postulants sang the Mass. Our voices filled the dome and high ceilings of the Motherhouse chapel. It was simply breathtaking. Our spirits soared! Christmas morning, after morning prayers and breakfast, we burst into joyous celebrations in our community room where we received letters and small gifts from our families and small, handmade trinkets from our "sisters". I've never before or since experienced such peaceful joy.

I left the convent. And what happened to Christmas? It was impossible to recreate those days. I grieved the loss of Christmas past. I wanted it back. Every year seemed disappointing. No matter how hard I tried, it was never as good as it was when I was a child or a nun. It was broken. I couldn't get it right.

Well, first of all there was nothing wrong with Christmas. There was something wrong with my expectations. Thinking back to the Convent, the expectation was that we prepare. Advent was the time for preparation. That preparation was mainly a preparation of our individual spirits. We prepared ourselves to be at peace in order to be open to the joy that was the message of Christmas. We didn't prepare by running madly about shopping and decorating.

Also, as a UU, I needed to find the "meaning" of Christmas. I couldn't justify this holiday. Isn't it, after all, just another day? Thinking about the convent and their practice during Advent, I've just recently come to the conclusion that this is also what we, as UU's, seek. We seek spiritual maturity. We seek peace. We understand that life's journey means learning to love ourselves so we can truly love our neighbors.

Advent reminds us to slow down and consider who we are as individuals. It reminds us to consider our relationships with one another and with our world. So, as you spend the rest of Advent preparing for "The Coming", be at peace. Make it whatever it is to be for you and embrace it. Take this time to prepare your heart to receive and celebrate the simple message of Jesus.

Marsha Laya

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Board Briefs

From Marsha Laya



The Board of Trustees met on Wednesday, November 14th at 2:00 PM at the Church. All members of the Board were present along with Rev. Gy. Guest Larry Higgins also attended and presented a suggestion for a class and a recommendation for new members. The complete minutes of the Board will be routinely attached to a Friday email news when they are completed and approved your Trustees. The highlights of actions taken at this meeting include the following:

- The policy for Emergency Closing of the Church and communication of this action to members was reviewed. Several suggestions were made for updating this policy dated 2001.
- The policy for managing electronic archives was reviewed and suggestions were made for better explaining who can access the electronic archives and how.
- The Board approved engaging Vanco as a method of electronic giving until the end of this fiscal year, after which the efficacy of its use will be reviewed. Included with this approval were recommendations for several individuals to participate in Vanco's demonstration/training. There will also be an explanation/training offered to members on how to access and use this method of giving once it has been set up and is operational.
- Results of the survey about the newsletter were reviewed. Basically, no changes will be made to the current newsletter except that it will be published 11 months with June and July being combined. In addition, if a "reporter/editor" can be recruited, an additional column will be added. The reporter would solicit or accept articles on subjects such as: success stories, generosity Sunday's selected non-profit, UU principles or history, social justice issues, social events, youth experiences, and general events in our greater community.
- Progress on the list of Action items was reviewed. This is a routine item where Board members report on the tasks assigned to them from previous meetings.
- The list of opportunities (developed at the Board Retreat) was reviewed. If an item was not a Board issue, consideration was given as to whether or not it needed to be passed on to a committee.
- The board was visited by member Larry Higgins and heard his ideas on the Path to Membership. Larry also asked for input on a course in a Chinese movement discipline that he would like to offer at the church. He will be announcing the details soon.
- A report from the expanded Building and Grounds Committee explained progress on a prioritized list of repairs and improvements, as well as church events such as Christmas decorating and an indoor spruce-up day in February.
- The next meeting of the Board of Trustees will be on December 12th at 2:00 PM at the Church. All are welcome to attend.

Marsha Laya

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Caring Community News

"Both the WINTER and the SUMMER SOLTICES are expressions of LOVE. They show us the opposition of light and dark, expansion and contraction, that characterize our experiences in the EARTH school so that we can recognize our options as we move throughout our lives."

~ Gary Zukav

In this month of many holidays and celebrations, we celebrate the UCCers who have December birthdays. Happy birthday to Ken Van Eseltine, Matthew Nelson, Tami Brozovich, Nancy Calme, Rev Gy, Mary Roscoe, Steve Tasko, and Marcus Ragains.

Last month we said goodbye to Brian Leekley and now it has been reported that Brian made his way safely across USA and is living in Bainbridge Island, Washington. He is doing well - in fact, he was able to spend Thanksgiving with his brother and family in Santa Cruz, CA and for Christmas he will be visiting a friend in Spokane, WA. He would enjoy hearing from us - his contact information can be found in the Community Room at UCC.

This month we remember herb Thompkins, a founder, who inspired us and brought joy with his music, his humor, and his wonderful poetry. We lost Herb in 2001, and we treasure his memory. Examples of his poetry plus photos of Herb can be found in our archive albums.

May we all learn to be gracious, both in the giving and the receiving of care when needs arise. If you have a need, or are aware of a need, please contact one of our point persons: Nancy Crowell, Judy Oliver, or Judy Pigg-Behrendt.

Enjoy this season of Gratitude and generosity. Sharing is Caring.

Doing Our Own Work: An Anti-Racism Seminar for White People

This very important seminar is coming back to Kalamazoo. I, Kimberly Ridley, experienced this 6-day seminar last year and it was so deep and meaningful - I received so much out of this seminar on my journey toward Anti-Racism and understanding what it means to be white. I took 3 days of vacation on the Fridays to be able to attend - and it was so worth it.



There was a waiting list last year, and many people didn't get into the seminar because of the limitation to 20 participants. I encourage you to consider this seminar and to pass this information along to any person/organization you feel may be interested. It is offered by Allies for Change on these dates: February 22 & 23, March 22 & 23, and April 19 & 20, 2019. Scholarships are available - nobody will be turned down for not being able to pay - no questions asked. Please visit the Allies for Change website for more information: <http://alliesforchange.org/doow-kalamazoo-2019.html>

Christmas Eve Service Choir Rehearsals

Here are the rehearsal dates at UUCC for the choir, along with the pieces we will be performing with the People's Church choir. All are welcome to join in singing! Please contact Nick at nicholas.d.sienkiewicz@wmich.edu if you have questions or concerns.

- Monday, December 3rd from 6-8pm
- Saturday, December 8th from 3-5pm
- Tuesday, December 11th from 6-8pm
- Saturday, December 22nd from 2-5pm



- 1) **Veni, Veni Emmanuel** (Antiphons)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xRi1GDoaQu4>
 We will not be singing all of the verses
- 2) **Joy to the World** (Hymnal)
- 3) **Peace, Peace** by Rick Powell
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CptWfF8F0Bk>
- 4) **The First Nowell** (Hymnal)
- 5) **Glow** by Eric Whitacre
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MwDDK3jodw>
- 6) **The Little Drummer Boy** (TBD)
- 7) **Silent Night** (TBD)

Service Auction Wrap-Up

Another successful annual service auction is behind us, and we are happy to report income of \$4,027 from the live and silent auctions, the meal, and the 50/50 raffle.

Many volunteers donated their time and talent to make this happen. The auction team was comprised of Lee Smittendorf, Marsha Laya, Joe and Nancy Calme, and Lauren Ritter. Lee, aided by Marsha as his clerk, served as auctioneer. Joe prepared the slides, while Nancy served as cashier, and Lauren managed the silent auction.

The indoor tailgate meal resulted from the efforts of another team: Rev. Gy, Mary King, Denise Sonier, and Steve Tasko. Mary made and donated all of the side dishes, Denise and Steve provided all the desserts, and Rev. Gy flipped burgers. Other volunteers pitched in to clean up and wash dishes.

The bar was ably managed by Herb Gross and his daughter, Nan. Eric and Regena Nelson and Ron and Nancy Crowell set up the room for the auction.

During the meal and silent auction, the popular band, Big Trouble, entertained us.

Your Stewardship Committee, composed of Chair Regena Nelson, Ron Crowell, Joe Calme, and Beverly Folz, expresses appreciation to all who helped and to all of you who made donations, attended, and bought services and items.



The Flaming Chalice

by Marsha Laya

Lighting the Chalice is a sacred ritual. Not only is this ritual an internal part of our Sunday Services, but it is also included before many of our meetings and gatherings. We know it symbolizes our Unitarian Universalist faith, but who created it? When did it start? How did the flaming chalice become the symbol of Unitarian Universalism?

In the 1930's, an artist by the name of Hans Deutsch was living in Paris and drew critical cartoons of Adolf Hitler. When the Nazis invaded Paris in 1940, he abandoned all and fled to the South of France, then to Spain and finally to Portugal. It was in Portugal that he met the Rev. Charles Joy, executive director of the Unitarian Service Committee. The Service Committee was newly founded in Boston to assist Eastern Europeans (Jews as well as UU 's) escape Nazi persecution. Hans Deutsch was soon impressed with Rev. Joy and his work. He was so impressed he soon found himself working with this Service Committee. Hans said simply, "I may not be a believer, but if this kind of life is the profession of your faith then it is one to which even a 'godless' fellow like myself can say wholeheartedly, yes!"

The Unitarian Service Committee was an unknown organization in 1941. This was a serious handicap in a cloak and dagger world where barriers of language, faith, and nationality could mean life instead of death. Disguises, signs, and countersigns might cross borders and were a means to freedom. The Service Committee needed a symbol. Thus, Deutsch was asked to create a symbol which could be used to identify the organization. Deutsch designed the flaming chalice. He had never seen a Unitarian or Universalist church, nor heard a sermon. What he had seen was faith in action. He witnessed people who were willing to risk all for others in a time of urgent need.

In the mind of this artist, the chalice was like that which the Greeks and Romans put on their alters. The holy oil burning in the chalice was a symbol of helpfulness, hope, and sacrifice. The flaming chalice, designed by Hans Deutsch, was made into a seal for papers and a badge for agents moving refugees to freedom.

This story of Hans Deutsch reminds us that the symbol of the flaming chalice stood, in the beginning, for a life of service. Today the flaming Chalice is the official symbol of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee and the Unitarian Universalist Association. It is the logo for hundreds of congregations and a focal point for worship. No one meaning or interpretation is official. The flaming chalice, like our faith, stands for openness to receive new truths that pass the tests of reason, justice, and compassion.

So, as we go forth in our shared faith, let us be reminded not only of its origin, but also that the flaming chalice is a symbol of truths so deep they are yet to be discovered, and that we are open to their discovery.

Marsha Laya

marshalaya@gmail.com



The Rehnberg Memorial Window, created in 1974 by Frank Houtkamp, at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Rockford, Illinois (© [Phil Lund](#))



Being taught **to avoid talking about politics and religion** has led to a lack of understanding of politics and religion.

What we should have been taught was **how to have a civil conversation** about a difficult topic.

Round Table Discussion Thursday, December 6th, 6:00 pm

Join us for a time of learning how to have honoring discussions while possibly disagreeing. Please bring your questions, your thoughts, and what you're learning and thinking about spirituality and about the world in which we live. And please bring an open mind and heart, all the better to hear each other with, my dears.

Health Screening at UCC January 5, 2019



Life Line Screening, a leading provider of community-based preventive health screenings, will be offering a preventive health event at UCC on January 5, 2019. Five screenings will be offered that scan for: potential health problems related to blocked arteries which is a leading cause of stroke; abdominal aortic aneurysms which can lead to a ruptured aorta; hardening of the arteries in the legs which is a strong predictor of heart disease; irregular heart beat which is closely tied to stroke risk; and a bone density screening, for men and women, used to assess the risk of osteoporosis.

Register for a Wellness Package which includes 4 vascular tests and osteoporosis screening from \$149. All five screenings take 60-90 minutes to complete. Please call 1-888-653-6441 or visit <http://lifelinescreening.com/communitycircle> for information about how to register for this event. This is the second time this service has been offered at UCC.

VOLUNTEER HELP WANTED

UCC 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
- **Religious Education** - Jacquis Robertson
- **Greeters and Folks to be at Tables for Sunday Service** - Nancy Crowell





**UU Community Church
is served by:**

Rev. Gy Ludvig-McCartney M.Div., M.A.
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Cell: 269-352-2412

Jacquis Robertson
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Kristi Montgomery
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Limited hours in office vary.
uucommunity@gmail.com
Church office: 269-324-7262

2018-2019 Board of Trustees

Marsha Laya

Betty Lee Ongley

Mary Roscoe

Nancy Calme

Denise Sonier

**The next Newsletter Deadline is
Wednesday, December 19th at 5:00 pm**
Send Submissions to:
uuccnewsletter@gmail.com

Community Matters

**Unitarian Universalist Community Church
of Southwest Michigan**

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