



CommUnity Matters

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest Michigan

January 2019

January Services

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

Sunday, January 6th - "Letter to Self" with Rev. Gy
Watch our Friday email for more information. We
welcome you with us, as always.

**Sunday, January 13th - "Restorative Justice" with
guest speaker Molly Mechtenberg**

This service will be a brief introduction into
restorative justice. It will look at restorative justice
philosophy as well as practices. Molly
Mechtenberg works as a Youth Conflict Resolution
Specialist and Restorative Justice Practitioner for
[Gryphon Place](#) in Kalamazoo, Michigan. She began
this position in 2014 after extensive work with
young people. She has been trained in civil
mediation as well as restorative justice practices.
Molly is co-founder of [Peace House](#) in the Eastside
neighborhood of Kalamazoo. Peace House,
founded in 2006, is an intentional community
whose work is to support families in the Eastside
neighborhood, primarily through work with
children. Molly lives at Peace House with her
husband, Jerry Berrigan, and their three children.

**Sunday, January 20th - Rev. Gy will be sharing
with us this morning.**

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

**Sunday, January 27th - Rev. Gy will be sharing
with us this morning.**

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



From the Minister

Rev. Gy Ludvig Mc-Cartney

I am writing this on the very last
day of the year. 2018 – what a
year it's been!

We've done much. Paved the
parking lot, put together a
strategic plan, implemented the
strategic plan, decluttered the church, hired a
new administrative assistant, added a new
member to our music team, and so much
more!

I am deeply grateful for our staff who make my
life seem so easy.

Jacquis does a wonderful job with the children,
she's creative, committed, a steady, balanced
presence. More than anything I am always
touched by the goodness of her heart.

Nick, dear Nick!! I love his enthusiasm,
competence, and big heart. How lucky are we
for having him bring music into our lives???

Sara is the most recent addition to our music
team and while I love the rhythm she brings to
us, I am even more impressed by her story, and
perspective. She's truly a gift to our community.

If I had to create an administrative assistant
from scratch, I couldn't come up with anything
as good as Kristi. She is simply amazing! She
isn't just competent, she also does it all with
heart. She's often said that this is more than
just a job for her, it is a way of attending to her
spiritual needs as well. Grateful me!

(Continued on page 2)



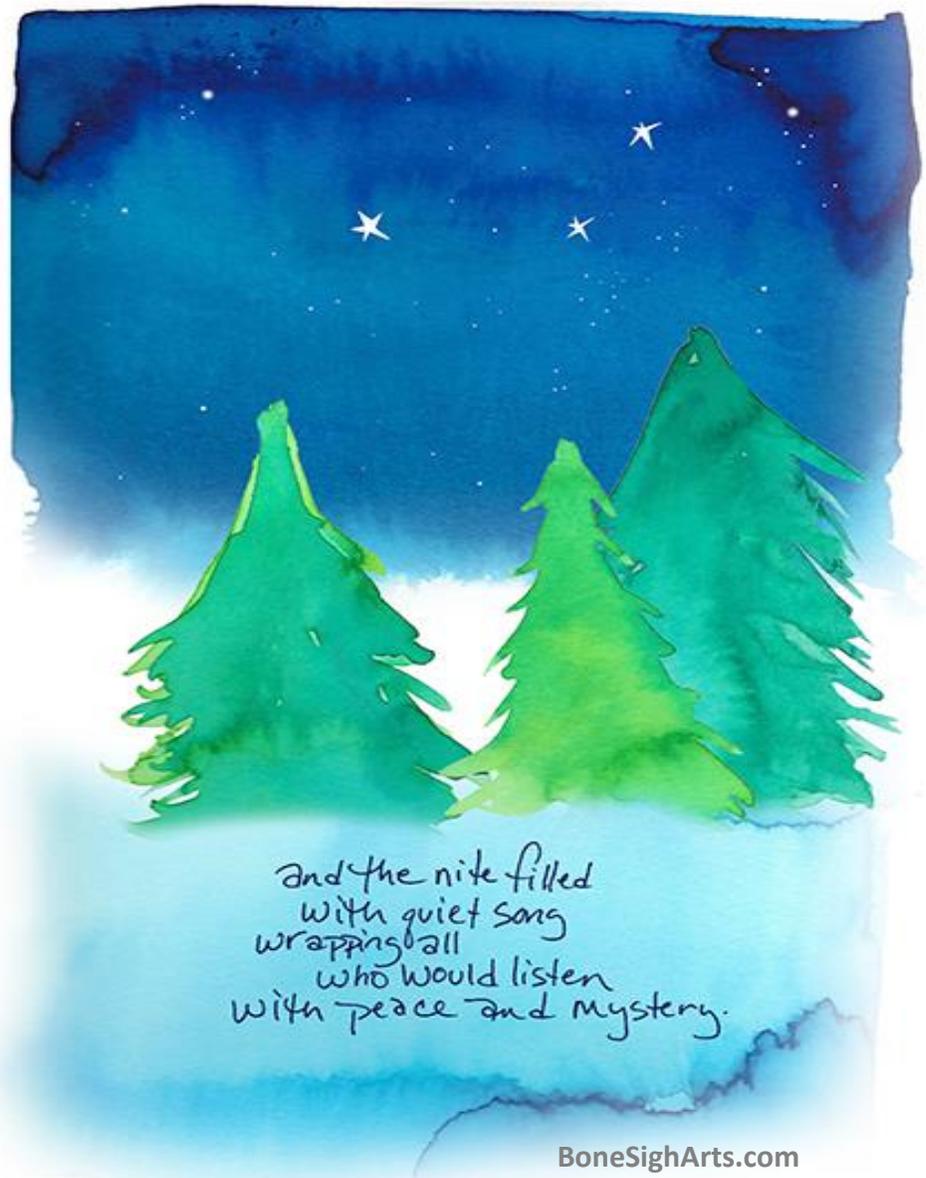
We have a Board that work well together and like each other. This sentence is worth a double take. Yes, we have a Board who like each other and work well together!!! Miracles do happen, don't they?

I am eternally impressed and grateful for our many volunteers. In most congregations 20% of the people do 80% of the work. That is not so in our community. It is in fact almost the other way around. We can all feel very good about ourselves!

We also bid farewell to two of our beloved members, Brian Leekley and Jon Vandenberg. They've been cornerstones for so long and we miss them greatly. May they find joy in their new communities and may they be richly blessed with a life that brings them joy and meaning.

I raise my imaginary glass of champagne to UUCC. Here's to us, here's to a wonderful, meaningful, joy filled year! May we be blessed and in return may we be a blessing to everyone we touch.

Happy New Year!!!



Women’s Book Group - January

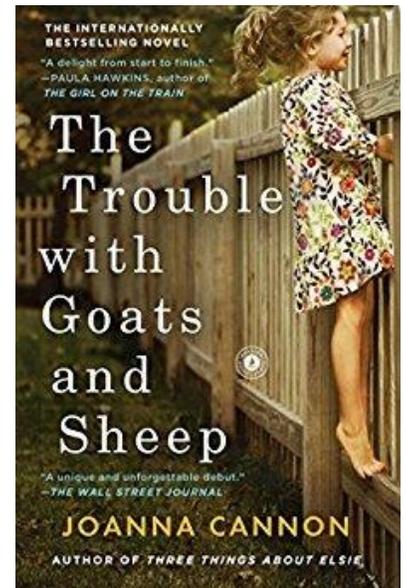
The Trouble with Goats and Sheep

by Joanna Cannon

11:30 am - Lunch at [Full City Café](#), 7878 Oakland Drive, Portage
1:00 pm - Book discussion in the UUCC Community Room

Our group discussion leader for this month’s book is Betty Lee Ongley, and the hostess will be Rita Stevens. Please contact Betty Lee Ongley at bongley@charter.net to reserve your spot for lunch with the group. All UUCC women are welcome.

“Part coming-of-age story, part mystery, The Trouble with Goats and Sheep is a quirky and utterly charming debut about a community in need of absolution and two girls learning what it means to belong.” [\[read more\]](#)



January Calendar

Saturday, January 5th All day - Life Line Screening	Sunday, January 6th 10:00 am - “Letter to Self” with Rev. Gy 11:30 am - Potluck hosted by the Connections Team
Wednesday, January 9th 12:15 pm - Stewardship Meeting 2:00 pm - Board Meeting 5:30 pm - Sunday Services Committee Meeting	Friday, January 11th 11:30 am - Women’s Book Group at Full City Café 1:00 pm - Women’s Gook Group Book Discussion at UUCC
Sunday, January 13th 10:00 am - “Restorative Justice” 11:30 am - Faith in Action meeting	Saturday, January 19th 8:30 am - Men’s Breakfast @ Burger Town Grille
Sunday, January 20th 10:00 am - Service with Rev. Gy 11:30 am - Program Council Meeting	Wednesday, January 23rd February Newsletter Deadline (extended)
Saturday, January 26th UUCC Annual Chili Supper (time TBA)	Sunday, January 27th 10:00 am - Service with Rev. Gy 11:30 am - R.E. Committee Meeting

R.E.flections

Jacquis Robertson
Director of
Religious Education



"I hope that in this year to come, you make mistakes.

Because if you are making mistakes, then you are making new things, trying new things, learning, living, pushing yourself, changing yourself, changing your world. You're doing things you've never done before, and more importantly, you're Doing Something."
 – Neil Gaiman

Here we are at the beginning of 2019, we made it! 2018 marked the building of a beautiful foundation in faith, love, and fundamentals for growth. We were able to create a Mission and Vision and cultivate a group for the implementation of that mission and vision, and we were able to see where breath and rest were necessary for the congregation and make the necessary accommodations. 2018 laid the groundwork for a fruitful 2019.

A few weeks ago during an R.E. lesson, I asked the kids what their dreams were, what they wanted to be when they grew up. While I got the ever so popular, "Rich" and a few trades here or there, it really led into this conversation about how children just don't dream anymore. When I heard this, I was shocked and slightly mortified that children weren't dreaming, but then I took a moment and thought, maybe kids weren't dreaming the way I dreamt as a kid because they're doing. They are making their dreams a reality in real time, they're creating, dancing, singing, and

moving without a care in the world because they have the tools necessary to reach the success they desire right at this moment.

So, I would challenge you, as well as myself, to move in the way youth move, make your dreams reality in real time. Live and enjoy the moments you have here on this planet in real time and don't wait for perfection.

Happy Holidays!

Cookie Walk

R.E. will be holding a Cookie Walk Fundraiser January 6, 2018 after service. If you would like to donate cookies, please let Jacquis know by emailing her at Jacquis.O.Robertson@gmail.com.

Troy Robertson III will be speaking to the Children in R.E. on January 20

Troy Robertson III (as you might have guessed) is my youngest brother, but aside from that he is an accomplished musician. He graduated from Western Michigan University with a degree in Music and a minor in Global and International Studies. He served five years in Western Michigan University's Marching Band, one of those in the Euphonium section and four in the Drumline. He currently works as a Battery Percussion Caption for Fennville and a quad instructor for Howell Public Schools. He also is the bassist for the Jazz Fusion band [Minor Element](#).

Volunteers:

We are always in need of volunteers for Religious Education, If you would like to volunteer for R.E., please contact Jacquis at Jacquis.O.Robertson@gmail.com or sign up on the form on the R.E. Table.

January 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 UUCG people.

Dates	Lesson	Teacher
1/6	<i>New Year, New Me</i>	Jacquis Robertson
1/13	<i>What is Restorative Justice?</i>	Jacquis Robertson
1/20	<i>Troy Robertson III</i>	Jacquis Robertson
1/27	<i>UUer</i>	Jacquis Robertson

UUCG'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

marshalaya@gmail.com

Board Briefs

From Marsha Laya

The Board of Trustees met on Wednesday, December 12, 2018 at 2:00 - 4:00 at the Church. Below are the highlights of actions taken.

- The policy on Membership contained in the Handbook is redundant and is to be removed. The Bylaws define membership and the Connections Team has outlined the path to membership.
- The updated policy/procedure for emergency closing and CommUnity Matters (newsletter) was approved. It is to be placed on Google Drive and Board Handbooks.
- The recommendation to apply for a 24 hour liquor license for a special event was presented by Joe Calme on behalf of the Stewardship Committee. The Board approved the submission of up to four (4) licenses for special events within this fiscal year.
- The Office Administrator has secured a new full time position and can no longer provide regular office hours. There was consensus that her offer to continue to serve the church from home on evenings and/or weekends was accepted.
- First quarter 90-day projects were reviewed and determined to be completed or no longer relevant.
- The Board set four new 90 project goals. These projects are related to the following:
 - ◆ Process for semiannual performance review of our minister
 - ◆ Full implementation of electronic giving
 - ◆ Review/update of our Bylaws for the annual membership meeting
 - ◆ Consider the value of allowing paid staff/contractors who become members the right to vote and defining when they must abstain due to a conflict of interest.

Marsha Laya

marshalaya@gmail.com



Cost of Postage Stamps Increasing on January 27th, 2019

Judy Oliver found out and wanted to share that she was at USPS recently and learned that postage is going up in January. There has not been an increase for awhile, but this one is a big five cents per first-class stamp. The stamps will continue to be "forever" stamps, so if you use the mail much, you may want to consider an investment in postage stamps before rates go up. You can read more about [USPS postage rate increases](#).





Caring Community News

“For last year’s words belong to last year’s language and next year’s words await another voice. And to make an ending is to make a beginning.”
-- T.S. Eliot

During January 2019 we are still sending hopes and good health energy for the cure of Rev. Gy’s shingles. She continues to suffer the pain and tiredness of this disease. Please pass along your health wishes by card or in person, as she continues working, when possible.

We are also sending along wishes for a pain free, healthy back to Marsha Laya, our Board President. She has been trying methods of pain relief since mid-December and you may see her using one of the UUCC pillows while attending Sunday Services.

On a more cheerful note, thirteen UUCCers are celebrating their birthdays this month. Happy wishes go out to Dick Bott, Nancy Stob, Pat Fuehr, Lin Foote, Faye Clifton, Ron Crowell, Mary King, Amanda Nelson, Jamie Hatfield, Betty Lee Ongley, Kevin Brozovich, and Jo Cooper.

This month we remember Susie Johnson who died in 2006. Susie had been a very active member of UUCC and an enthusiastic participant in the book club. Otto Byers died just three years ago in 2015. He is remembered for his kindness and deep concern for social justice.

It is important that we hear one another in community so that we may share our joys and concerns — we are not alone. If you have, or are aware of a member/friend with a need for help, please contact one of the point persons for Caring Community: [Nancy Crowell](#), [Judy Oliver](#), or [Judy Plgg/Behrendt](#).

Contribution Statements to be mailed in January

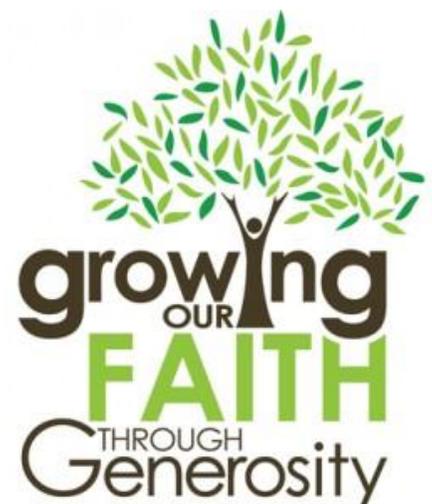
If you gave traceable payments on a pledge or other contributions to UUCC, you will be receiving a Contribution Statement in January by email or USPS mail. The Contribution Statement shows all your giving activity recorded in church records for the calendar year ended 12/31/18. This statement is intended to support your tax records and claims of deductions for charitable giving to UUCC. All receipts made via check or other recorded means for which you received no goods or services will be listed. As always, please review your record and let me know if you find any discrepancies which require correction. Your contributions and donations are sincerely appreciated.

Thank you,

Kimberly Ridley, Assistant Treasurer

ridleyk@hotmail.com

(269) 569-3658



Robo Calls - An Option for Opting Out

by Marsha Laya

Bothered by those robo calls? Here's an option. Warning: This option takes a bit of time, but it may turn out to save you aggravation. I have 531 contacts. It took me about 2 hours.

One solution is to simply not answer calls from numbers you don't recognize. But this isn't the final solution for me because I have to get up, find my phone and look at the screen. Inevitably, the phone is ringing when I have to dry my hands or dig my phone out of my purse or pocket. I want to know it's a robo call before struggling for my phone.

So here are the steps you can take to address that additional issue:

1. Entered ALL of the names and phone numbers of everyone you know into your contacts. Include all your businesses (doctors, dentists, hair dresser, plumbers, septic tank cleaner, all of them). Enter all your friends, family members, extended family members, UCC members. Everyone!
2. As you enter the names and phone numbers give them all the SAME unique ring tone.
3. Change your answering voice message to say, for example, "Leave a message or risk having your number blocked".
4. Now change your "default" ring tone to something obnoxious.

When there is a call from someone who is not in your contacts, the ring tone will be obnoxious and you won't need to run around looking for your phone. You can simply ignore it. Should the party leave a message, you can return the call at your convenience. If the party is in your contacts, you will hear a nice ring tone. Oh Happy Day! Why didn't I think of this before? Need help? If you have an Apple product, I'm at your disposal.

Marsha Laya

marshalaya@gmail.com

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?

Look for sign-up sheets before and after the service, or check in with any of these lovely people to find out how you can help with these duties:

- **Coffee Hour** - Denise Sonier
- **Religious Education** - Jacquie Robertson
- **Greeters and Folks to be at Tables for Sunday Service** - Nancy Crowell



A Story of Trust

by Marsha Laya, Board President

The League of Michigan Bicyclists (LMB) has a program where an LMB member can list his/her home as free lodging for an LMB cross country or long distance cyclists. When a cyclist sets out on a journey, he or she can search the listing, contact the home owner and crash (not literally) on the home owner's lawn, living room floor or, if lucky, in a real bed for the night.

So, one day, Lee called me on his way home from Battle Creek saying he met a cyclist. He was biking "loaded"; meaning he had all his basic needs strapped to his bike and was "tripping" solo on a long distance journey. Lee asked if the cyclist could spend the night with us. Knowing of, and having registered with LMB's program, I immediately responded in the affirmative. What fun!

Given the "thumbs up", John, the cyclist, loaded all his belongings into the trunk of Lee's car. Lee took off, leaving John to ride the remaining few miles without the heft of his luggage.

John did spend the night with us. He left in the morning having showered (I insisted) and having washed everything he owned (6 loads). He also ate two large meals and packed three additional ones for the road. He talked us out of three or four pair of new socks, a bit of cash and a fist full of vitamins. John was a homeless man who, in his words, was "Riding for World Peace." Not dangerous, but maybe a tiny bit deranged.

When John finally pulled away on his loaded bicycle very late the next morning, I asked Lee, "What the hell were you thinking?" John was obviously NOT the typical LMB cyclist! Lee trusted this man.

Trust. If you think about it, most people are trustworthy. In all my years, I know only one person I no longer trust. Only one. Well, maybe two, if I consider my whole life. That's because most people know and respect boundaries. Most can be counted on to do what they say they will do. If they happen to make a mistake, they own it, apologize and make amends. And when mistakes happen, they trust they will be forgiven. We quickly learn who can be trusted to keep our secrets. And we also learn not to trust those who cannot forgive or who share secrets (dirt) they have no business sharing.

But there is one element of trust that is sometimes overlooked. Trust begins with trusting. It begins with assuming the best of another. Lee did that. Lee assumed John to be trustworthy. He assumed that John was coming from a place of pure and simple need. Lee simply thought: "Here's a fellow cyclist. I wonder if he would like a place to sleep. I'll stop and ask." And John did the same in



return. John assumed that Lee's motives were pure as he loaded his gear (all his worldly possessions) in the trunk of Lee's car and watched him drive away. John assumed, "This stranger is offering hospitality." John and Lee took one another at face value. Each did not assume anything more of the other. Each trusted the intentions of the other to be pure. Because of their trust in one another, I had the pure pleasure of meeting John and listening to his convoluted, crazy adventures and doing his laundry late into the night. What fun!

So here's my New Year's Resolution: Always assume the best of everyone. Assume their motives and intentions are pure. And when in doubt, have the courage to check it out.

Happy New Year to all of you. May it be filled with trusting relationships.

Marsha Laya

marshalaya@gmail.com

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

February 22 & 23, March 22 & 23, and April 19 & 20, 2019

At this time in our nation, we are witnessing an alarming resurgence of white supremacy and state sanctioned violence. It is imperative that those of us who are white do the deep work required to claim and embody an anti-racist identity, understand the privilege we carry, and interrupt racism where we live, work, study, and volunteer. Doing Our Own Work helps white people move through places where we often get stuck, so that we can step up with courage, clarity, humility, and compassion to participate in movements led by people of color and help move other white people to greater anti-racist awareness and action.



This very important seminar is coming back to Kalamazoo. Kimberly Ridley experienced this 6-day seminar last year and shared that 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."

Enrollment is limited to 20 people to facilitate in-depth reflection, dialogue and relationship building. Please visit the [Allies for Change website](#) for more information and to register and hold your spot for this seminar full of important work we all need to be doing. Scholarships are available - nobody will be turned down for not being able to pay - no questions asked.

"Allies are people passionately committed to eliminating systems of oppression that unjustly benefit them. The word 'ally' is not a label that people with privilege can claim for themselves, nor a static reality, once and for all achieved. People who are targets of oppression determine who their allies are. The activism of those who strive to be allies must always be rooted in humility, collaboration, and accountability."

~ Melanie S. Morrison, Executive Director, Allies for Change

**UU Community Church
is served by:**

Rev. Gy Ludvig-McCartney M.Div., M.A.
Consulting Minister
By Appointment Only
gyludvig@gmail.com
Cell: 269-352-2412

Jacquis Robertson
By Appointment Only
Director of Religious Education
Jacquis.o.robertson@gmail.com
Cell: 269-569-9337

Kristi Montgomery
Office Administrator
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, January 23rd at 5:00 pm**

**Send Submissions to:
uuccnewsletter@gmail.com**

CommUUnity Matters

**Unitarian Universalist Community Church
of Southwest Michigan**

10441 Shaver Rd.
Portage, MI 49024
269-324-7262

uucommunity@gmail.com
www.facebook.com/uuccswmi

