

August 2024

Gwinnett News for Unitarian Universalists

The Practices of Democracy and Compassion

Of course it makes sense that we would be talking about Democracy in an election year. And of course it makes sense that we are talking about Compassion in any year - we're UUs, after all. But it's important to realize that practicing democracy isn't just about elections and voting. Like compassion, we have the opportunity to practice democracy every day in almost every aspect of our lives. We invite you to explore with us this month the many ways we can lean into and embrace the intertwined principles of democracy and compassion.

Learn more about how UUCG will be leaning into these core values [here](#).

The Practice of **Democracy & Compassion**



Worship in August

Sundays at 11:00am

Theme:

The Practices of Democracy and Compassion

Join us in-person or via Zoom

<https://zoom.us/j/565460176>



August 4

Blessing Our Backpacks and Practicing Democracy

What do you use to carry the tools of your learning—a backpack, tote bag, tablet, journal, or phone? Please bring this “container” to service this Sunday, as we Bless the Backpacks of children, youth, adults, and elders.

We'll continue the multigenerational learning with an exercise in democracy involving small-group collaboration and creation around our Unitarian Universalist values. Online, you'll want to have paper and a writing or drawing implement nearby. Come join us for building our beloved community ... democratically!

Rev. Nancy Palmer Jones (she/her), Service Leader

August 11

Home is Where the Heart Is

The human heart is the first home of democracy, It is where we embrace our questions. Can we be equitable (in our democracy)? Can we be generous (in our compassion)? Can we listen with our whole beings, not just our minds, and offer our attention rather than our opinions?" observes American author Terry Tempest Williams. In our actual homes, how can we serve as guidelines for our relationships with our family and housemates?

Bill Benshoof (he/him), Service Leader

Candice Carver (she/her), Service Leader

August 18

Who Are Our Role Models?

This Sunday, Rev. Nancy brings her enthusiasm for a couple of our religious role models who show us how to put democracy and compassion into action in troubled times. We've been here before! Whose example do you want to follow?

Rev. Nancy Palmer Jones (she/her), Service Leader

August 25

What Would the Animals Say?

Understanding the voices of your constituents when all you hear are sounds more like the call of nature rather than a life lesson. Practicing Compassion and Democracy in the Wild (or the Backyard).

Lydia Patrick (she/her), Service Leader

Programs

Sundays at
12:30pm

1st Sunday, August 4

no program

Potluck

2nd Sunday, August 11

Spiral Scouts

(pre-registration required)

Belief Explorers

3rd Sunday, August 18

Sunday Tarot

4th Sunday, August 25

Good Trouble





The Palmer Papers

What's Our Vision for a Compassionate Democracy Now?



Our theme for August, “The Practices of Democracy and Compassion,” reminds me of a class I took in the spring of 2001 when I was in divinity school. The class, offered at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, was called “Education for Social and Political Change.” In it, we students and faculty had to practice creating a truly democratic classroom. In such a classroom, every person’s voice and every person’s agency are honored. Those whose voices and agency have long been silenced or denied are given space to flourish and to lead, and everyone is called into the collaboration.

Curiosity, courage, and compassion fueled the conversations and arguments we had over our radical texts. Curiosity, courage, and compassion helped us to grow relationships across our many differences. The class felt relevant and right on time. Our work was messy and exciting.

Isn't this all part of who we hope to be at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Gwinnett, especially when we think about our own practices of democracy and compassion?

At the end of that class, I lay out a vision for my divinity school. For a more expansive democratic space than its hallowed halls had yet produced, despite the school’s stated goals:

I dream of a Harvard Divinity School community where inclusive love is made manifest, where opportunities for growth abound, where power is shared, and every voice is heard. I dream of a “new democracy” at the Divinity School where students, faculty, and staff of all races, ethnicities, social classes, sexual orientations, genders, religious persuasions, and states of ableness will sustain collaborations in which every member lovingly challenges the others to stay awake to issues of power and privilege, to inherited or acquired prejudices, to anything that would make life narrow and small. I dream of an HDS community in which dimensions of diversity are so widely represented and people’s multiple identities so thoroughly embraced and understood that members would be hard pressed to define a “norm” against which “difference” could be measured.

Even in my paper I admit that that’s a ridiculously idealistic vision! But maybe that kind of vision is necessary. How can we even begin to build such a beloved community if we can’t imagine it? Besides—as we had learned in our class—democracy is a process, not an outcome. Democracy happens in moments. Yet these moments can transform our present way of doing things, because they show us new possibilities.

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The Palmer Papers



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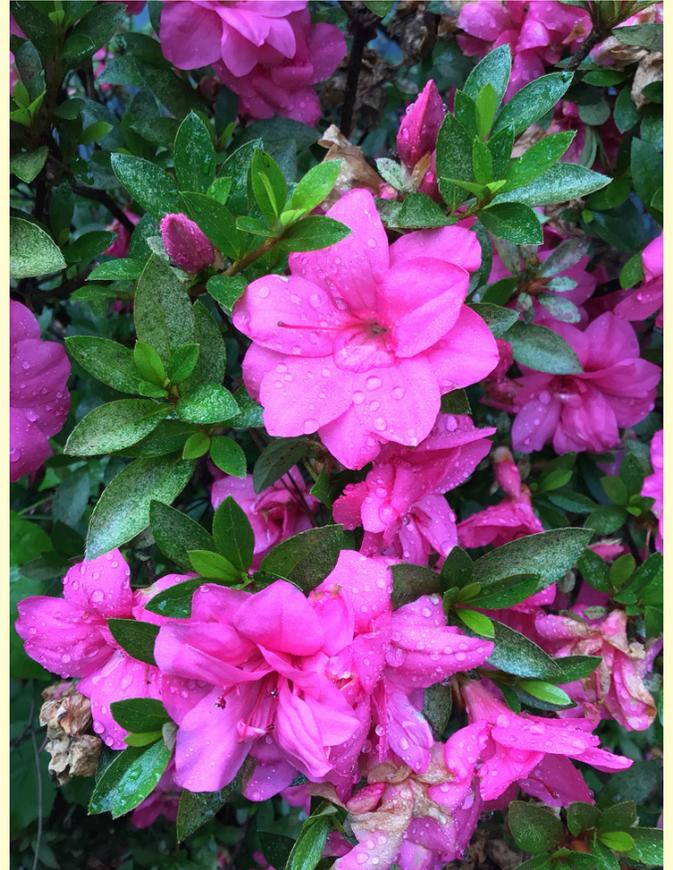
What if this beloved community set up rituals for recognizing and celebrating each moment of real democracy as it happens? Wouldn't that help us to create more of those moments? What if we recognize that there will always be reactionary forces that arise in response to those democratic moments when everyone's voice—and especially marginalized voices—are honored? And what if our community can learn how to manage those reactionary forces with courage and compassion? Wouldn't that lead to more healing moments, more moments when we all could relish and expand the beloved community we're creating?

My vision in spring 2001 came with a lot of grad-school headiness and innocence. Still, even now, in late summer 2024, I can feel the power and the relevance of that vision. Can you?

So what do you say? Shall we practice creating a compassionate democracy right here at UUCG this month, this year? What, then, is your vision for such a democracy here among us now?

With Love at the center,

Rev. Nancy



Message from the Board

By Dan Kelly (he/him)

Like any good comedy nerd, when I think of a Retreat, I think of Arthur and his knights screaming “Run Away!” as they escape killer rabbits. That is not what the UUCG Leadership Retreat is like. Thankfully. Rather, it was an immersive experience of UUCG Leadership, including the Board of Trustees, the Shared Ministry Council, and our professional Minister and Coordinator of Family Ministries, exploring our mission of Curiosity, Courage and Compassion.

The word “retreat” does still strike me as odd, as the experience we shared was not escapism at all, but it was a leaning in, an embrace, of the important work we do to live and share our UU values in the world each day. We did retreat from our phones and computers and worldly distractions to focus on the goals and vision of UUCG’s mission in the next year. We did retreat to the sharing of s’mores and stories.

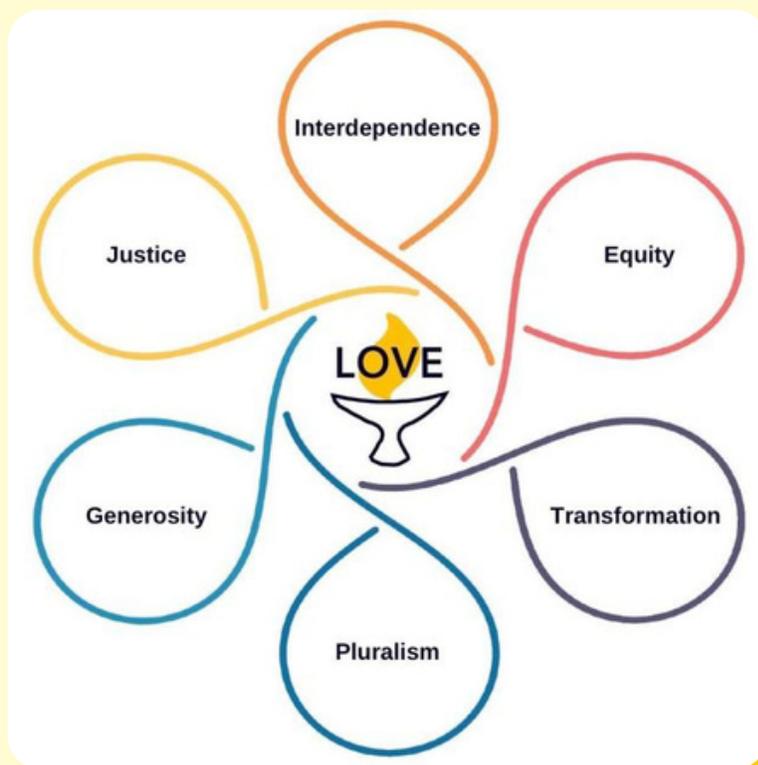
In the sense that “retreat” offers an opportunity of rejuvenation, revitalization, re-commitment to our UUCG mission, then yes, I feel well-rested.

“How a congregation makes and carries out decisions is a primary expression of its values.”
Dan Hotchkiss, Governance and Ministry.

We at UUCG believe in democratic principles, and we seek to embody those ideals in our covenant with one another as we do the work of the Board of Trustees and the Shared Ministry Council, in partnership with Reverend Nancy and professional staff. We work to embed those ideals in our by-laws, our vision statements, our congregational conversations, and anytime we gather in worship. We believe: All of us are leaders at UUCG.

We are all leading, together, to carry the light of our chalice out into the world. To burn brighter than any darkness that we may face. To share warmth with those left out in the cold. To illuminate the world with love.

In covenant,
Dan Kelly
President, Board of Trustees



graphic created by Tanya Webster



Did You Know: Coloring is a great way to de-stress.



Give Away the Plate Recipient



Our third quarter plate recipient is the New Georgia Project.

The New Georgia Project, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, is an effort to register, civically engage, and build power with the New Georgia Majority—the large and growing population of Black, brown, young, and other historically marginalized communities through nonpartisan voter registration, organizing, and advocacy on the issues important to our communities.

The selection of the New Georgia Project as our shared plate recipient is timely and relevant in this election season. Our ministry themes for July and August invite us to explore democracy as an expression of our core values. In addition, UUCG worked in partnership with The New Georgia Project for phone banking in 2020; and as part of our congregation's work toward achieving a Good Trouble Congregation Designation from the UUA, we are hoping to partner with them this year in projects over the summer months and into the fall.

[Learn more here](#)

LAY MINISTERS

New Slate of Lay Ministers at UUCG

- Radical Welcome- Carol Underwood (she/her)
- Green Space - Gary Kiel (he/him)
- Spiritual Growth - Lydia Patrick (she/her)
- Connecting Within - Lisa Kiel (she/her)
- Connecting Beyond - Candice Carver (she/her)

Communications Team Member Search

UUCG MEMBERS!

WE NEED YOU

OPEN VOLUNTEER POSITIONS:
COMMUNICATIONS
TEAM MEMBER

CONTACT [CANDICE CARVER](#) FOR DETAILS

Ministry of Radical Welcome

Message From the Lay Minister for Radical Welcome

By Carol Underwood (she/her)

Hello! My name is Carol Underwood and I'm your new lay minister of radical welcome! I'm so excited to be here and share the welcome first given me when my son Wesley and I first attended. We first came in 2022 for the Trunk or Treat event in the parking lot. I was so nervous I only brought my husband because I wasn't fully out about being polyamorous yet. We met so many of you all and the kids and I felt so welcomed into the community. I came from a place of self judgment and rejection, and your welcoming community made me feel as part of the shared community. This is a place I could finally be open about who I am, and accepted just as I am. Many of you actively wanted to talk to Wesley and I and wanted to know how I best can plug into this congregation.

So let me open this to you. I want to know how you best want to plug into this congregation. I have found that joining different obligations is more work, but there is also camaraderie and connection through that. There is more than simply washing dishes after a potluck. There is always conversation. People working together is a connection that is valuable and enriching.

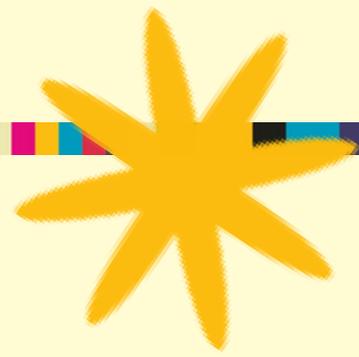
"We make the assumption that everyone sees life the way we do. We assume that others think the way we think, feel the way we feel, judge the way we judge, and abuse the way we abuse. This is the biggest assumption that humans make. And this is why we have a fear of being ourselves around others. Because we think everyone else will judge us, victimize us, abuse us, and blame us as we do ourselves. So even before others have a chance to reject us, we have already rejected ourselves. This is the way the human mind works." The Third Agreement - Don Miguel Ruiz

We make assumptions about everything sometimes and that pushes us away from our loving communities. Let us all tell our own stories and not let that self doubt get in the way. That is how I was welcomed here. I made many assumptions about how the church worked and how the people in it behave. You all changed my mind about that, and I would love to share that spirit. I am inspired by what you all have shown to me. We have something beautiful to join together as a congregation, and I think it is worth sharing. That welcoming spirit with healthy boundaries is helpful in meeting people where they are in life, and hopefully we can both grow in the process.

Thanks!

Carol Underwood

Ministry of Radical Welcome



On Last Week's Trans-Related UUA Business Resolution

published with permission: written on June 30, 2024

by Alex Kapitan (ze/per)

This post is mostly for my cis Unitarian Universalist friends, as well as UU-adjacent folks who may be wondering why so many UUs shared pointed love for trans folks last weekend.

There was some hubbub during the Unitarian Universalist Association's annual General Assembly about the discussion on a strongly worded business resolution that affirms trans, nonbinary, and intersex people ("Embracing Transgender, Nonbinary, and Intersex People Is a Fundamental Expression of UU Religious Values").

I have some things to say about it.

Firstly, I want to be clear that this business resolution is fire. Unitarian Universalism is well known for its long-standing affirmation of LGBTQ people, and over the last two decades, the denomination has pointedly and increasingly expressed its explicit affirmation of trans people.

Three years ago, an Action of Immediate Witness (AIW) was passed, with 99% of the vote, that not only called on UUs to defend and advocate with trans, nonbinary, and intersex people in this moment of escalating anti-trans hate and legislation but also affirmed that living one's identity in terms of gender identity/expression, sex characteristics, and affectional/sexual orientation is part of our free exercise of religion.

The business resolution that passed last weekend, with 92% of the vote, is an even bigger deal because as a business resolution it has more teeth and will help the highest levels of our denomination continue to take action in the public square for trans justice. It names that the ability to live ever-more authentically as one's true self is central to a lifelong journey toward spiritual fulfillment. It names that supporting trans, nonbinary, intersex, and gender diverse people is a foundational obligation revealed by UU principles and values.

This is incredible, full stop. I would hazard a guess that it is the most powerful highest-level denominational statement of support of trans people any organized religion has made.

I also want to be clear that UUs are not known for agreeing on things. Any time our General Assembly votes higher than 90% "yes" on something, particularly a justice issue, it is very meaningful. (The same GA that voted 99% "yes" on the trans AIW voted only 77% "yes" on an AIW that called for action on a solid set of issues related to covid, including universal healthcare and mutual aid.)

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Ministry of Radical Welcome

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So what happened last weekend? The discussion consisted of five people speaking in opposition to the resolution and five people speaking in favor. (Any delegate may get in line to speak for or against a proposal; UU congregations each get to send a certain number of lay and professional delegates to General Assembly.) The first of those opposed expressed “concern” about the explicit inclusion of trans youth in the resolution, and rattled off a series of typical talking points that anti-trans entities have been pushing to anyone who will listen, including legislators.

He spoke of gender dysphoria as a choice that young people are making, called their understanding of themselves into question, was ignorant about puberty blockers and hormones, and spent the bulk of his allotted time citing the problematic Cass Review, which has been denounced by a growing list of mainstream health organizations.

The second “con” speaker was actually in favor of the resolution but seemed to have gotten the false impression that it was calling trans children mentally ill, and didn’t want that.

The third and fourth speakers against the resolution claimed to not be opposed to its content but didn’t like the idea of singling out a particular group for affirmation. One also threw in an aside about having concerns related to medical research on “identity dysphoria” (not a thing) and the other said UUs are already doing a great job affirming trans folks and was afraid the resolution would force churches to siphon resources away from other worthy issues.

The final speaker opposed to the resolution said some weird stuff about UUs becoming identitarian and that insisting on particular behavior from UUs borders on a creed (Unitarian Universalism is a non-creedal religion).

Understandably, a lot of trans/nonbinary UUs had a hard time with anti-trans bias getting a platform in this way. And I want to affirm that hearing this sort of stuff sucks, particularly in the context of our explicitly trans-affirming religion. It’s really painful.

What I don’t want is for my cis UU comrades to get the impression that what was said from the con mic was uniquely awful. It wasn’t. It was literally the bare minimum that many of us (certainly any of us who are active in trans advocacy on any level) have come to expect to encounter, daily, in every single aspect of our lives—including in church. (Mind you, that doesn’t make it acceptable. But we need to be clear.)

I also don’t want any of my non-UU comrades to think there’s any debate within UUism about trans folks. There isn’t. My heart goes out to all of my queer and trans beloveds whose faith traditions actively debate your worthiness, your real-ness, your belonging. Unitarian Universalism is not only consistently clear on its truly radical affirmation of us, but the denomination is filing amicus briefs in opposition to anti-trans laws, organizing to support trans folks’ medical care and relocations across state lines, and more.

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Ministry of Radical Welcome

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And.

What made the business resolution discussion painful for trans UUs is the fact that this shit is so ubiquitous, even here, where it shouldn't be. I need you to understand how exhausting it is that for every thirty fabulous, all-in, trans-affirming UUs there is one or two who grumps about pronouns, or doesn't want gender-neutral bathrooms at church, or has been taken in by right-wing anti-trans propaganda without even realizing that's what it is.

And that means that every Sunday we have to brace ourselves for encountering someone at church who calls us by the wrong pronoun or name, or makes an ignorant or insensitive comment, or worse. And most of the time we also have to brace ourselves for everyone else looking the other way, brushing it off, not taking it seriously.

The consistently hard thing for us queer and trans UUs is being part of a religion that so vehemently identifies as pro-LGBTQ but has so consistently struggled, for so long, to actually ensure that trans and queer people don't have crummy experiences in UU spaces. Marching in Pride is great, but if no one ever intervenes or interrupts casual racism, classism, ableism, sizeism, or hetero/cis/sexism at church, that says everything about what and who is most important to a church community.

Yes, this happens in your UU congregation too. Our movement has been hemorrhaging our young adults for decades because of this stuff. We attract scores and scores of folks who are queer, trans, people of color, disabled, neurodivergent, immigrants, and all sorts of other marginalized identities due to our awesome social justice work, and then when they attend church they experience the gap between our welcoming words and the actual actions of UUs in real time, and they leave, not only disappointed but hurt.

What makes it painful for trans UUs is the very reason this business resolution was proposed: a not-insignificant portion of the U.S. political machine is trying to kill us, to eradicate transness. More than six hundred anti-trans bills have been proposed in forty-three U.S. states so far this year. Fully half of U.S. states have banned life-saving best-practice medical care for trans youth.

In this moment, saying you're LGBTQ-affirming without taking responsibility for ensuring that trans attendees experience affirmation and safety in your space is worse than not saying you are LGBTQ-affirming. It makes you complicit in the harm that trans people are slogging through in our daily lives and looking for an escape from.

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Ministry of Radical Welcome

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If a church isn't LGBTQ-affirming, we go in cautiously, armored-up, not expecting anything different. When someone then says something hateful toward us, it sucks, but we aren't surprised. But if a church is flying a rainbow flag, we might go in hopeful. We see LGBTQ posters and maybe even some pronoun stickers on people's name badges and we get excited. From the pulpit, the standard welcome includes welcoming people of all gender identities, and we let go of the last of our armor and become fully open-hearted.

And then. Then after service someone says something crummy. Not hateful. Just an everyday sort of ignorance. Maybe it's about grammar, of all things. Maybe it's a false assumption about who we are or why we're here. Maybe we overhear someone expressing a "concern" about all this trans stuff, or about bathrooms, or about trans women athletes, and no one speaks up to counter it.

And in our hopeful excited open-heartedness we are crushed. It hurts so much more than the hate that we expect from anti-trans actors. Because it was supposed to be different here. Because you told us it would be different here. Because of how much we needed it to be different here, right now.

Do you understand? Do you understand why people need to stop holding out a yardstick that simply measures their church against the one down the street, the one in which trans people are not affirmed, and patting themselves on the back because of it? Do you understand that the yardstick we actually need is one that measures the gap between our words and our actions? Between how we think of ourselves and the actual experiences people have in our spaces?

Our theology demands this. It demands that we stop inviting people in only to hurt them.

That's what the hubbub was really about last weekend. There is no debate about whether trans people are beloved, or real, or worthy, or divine. There is no debate about whether Unitarian Universalism calls its adherents to advocate for justice for trans, nonbinary, intersex, and gender diverse people and create spaces of safety and resilience for us. The only uncertainty is whether UUs will actually live out these values and commitments in a way that matches the needs of this moment.

So thank you to those who expressed your love and support to trans UUs, and all trans people, last weekend and beyond. I have faith that it means you know that it's not specifically about what was said at the con mic last Friday but rather the ubiquity of anti-trans sentiments, both overt and subtle, that are causing a crushing level of exhaustion for trans folks. And I have faith that it means that you're using the right yardstick and are taking action to close that gap in Unitarian Universalism in all the ways you can.

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Ministry of Radical Welcome

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To my beloveds who are trans, nonbinary, Two Spirit, agender, gender fluid, gender fabulous, demigender, gender nonconforming, not-quite-sure-I'm-cis, intersex, and/or any number of other permutations of the glorious gender galaxy beyond the realm of the normative gender binary, regardless of your religious or spiritual orbit: Know that we are going to win, y'all. They can try to stop us, but it won't work. Do whatever you possibly can to be your whole glorious self and know that you are whole, holy, and perfectly made.

Love,
Alex

p.s. Please check out more incredible artwork by Rae Senarighi, @transpainter—the wonderful banners, flags, posters, stickers, and other fabulous items in his online store are perfect for showing your affirmation and love for the trans and queer folks in your life and in your congregation.



Gorgeous art by Rae Senarighi, @transpainter

[This article was published with permission. Please check out more of Alex's work at https://rootsgrowthetree.com/](https://rootsgrowthetree.com/)

Ministry of Green Space

Property Beautification

By Gar Kiel (he/him)

Hi All, this is Gary Kiel as the new Lay Minister of Green Space taking over from XoeY Kelley. Wish me luck, XoeY was awesome. Fortunately, she is still in the team so I am not totally lost.

Property Beautification

These beautiful people turned up on a hot July 6 to work on the grounds: Rob Kohl, Steve Smith, Jerrald Johnson, Dan and XoeY (see, I told you she was on the team), and me.

Last month Karen Smith wrote that “UUCG Has Been Invaded” referring to the invasive species. Well the space invaders are putting up a strong battle. We will be concentrating efforts on the target area along the driveway. Please come help on August 3 to battle the invaders.

Does anyone have a bobcat, bush hog, or other equipment that can help?



Sunbelt Stewards ARG

Let's explore the effects of climate change together! Join us to play 'Sunbelt Stewards' an Alternate Reality Game that takes place in a near-future Georgia where climate change has taken an even greater toll.

How will our congregation band together to take care of each other, how will our building withstand the extreme conditions, and is there something sinister about that water company?

Come discover the secrets and unravel the mystery together! There are no special rules to learn or complex guidelines. Simply ask to join the Sunbelt Stewards Facebook page to begin.

Property Beautification - Target Area



Ministry of Green Space

BrainStorm Meeting and Breakfast, August 17

Every 6 to 12 months the Green Team holds a brainstorming and planning meeting to generate ideas, refine activities and arrange dates. Activities in planning:

September 28-29 : UU Climate Justice Revival. This is a new thing from UUMFE to inform and revitalize our Climate Justice initiative. There are a lot of materials from service, songs, workshops, etc. We will cull and fit in with our worship service.

November TBD : Movie night has been very successful. We host a movie to dive in depth into a green topic. Last time Sierra Club and UU Metro Atlanta North (hUUMAN) came to the showing. They will be invited and we hope to grow attendance from the 29. Surely we can break 30 attendees!

TBD : A tour of a recycling facility is being offered by Georgia Interfaith Power and Light (GIPL).

Spring TBD : Web of Life course. Green team has hosted this intriguing program a few times. It may be replaced with a new program (that's why we have planning sessions).

That is a taste of the Green Team and Property Beautification activities. There is plenty of room for new members.



Green Team
invites you to our

*Brainstorming
Breakfast*

**Saturday,
August 17
9:30 to Noon**

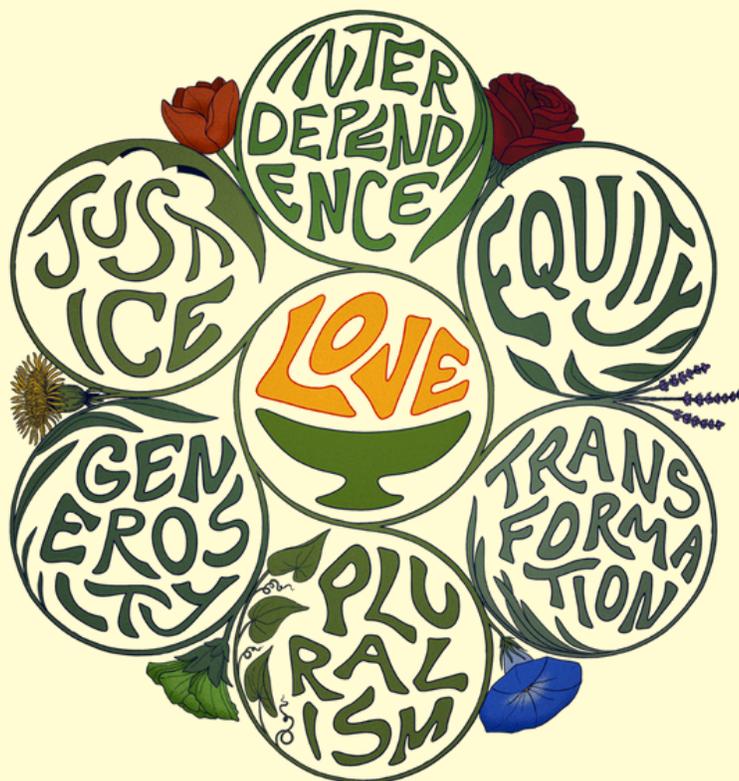
Enjoy coffee and breakfast fare as we plan out what we want accomplished at UUCG for the rest of the year, part of our commitment to the **UU Climate Justice Revival.**

Ministry of Spiritual Growth

Are you creating art exploring the UU Values? We are getting a gallery wall of congregant's art related to the values to be displayed in the sanctuary. For more information, email aharris@uucg.org

Words Of Wisdom?

Words of Wisdom? is an online collection of daily reflections composed by and for the UUCG community as a way to explore our monthly ministry themes more deeply. The Words of Wisdom? team of writers has (mostly) taken the summer off from composing daily reflections, but we are gearing up to resume in September. If you would like to join the group of folks from UUCG who share reflections on our monthly themes, we would love for you to join us! Please reach out to Bob Patrick or Christiana to express your interest or ask any questions you may have.



The flowers in this design were intentionally chosen:

- a red rose to remind us to center love,
- an orange tulip signifying this renewal of our shared values,
- a yellow dandelion for our resilience in trying times,
- a green carnation for queer identity,
- a blue morning glory representing respect for all living things,
- the violet lavender to signify our own empowerment.

art by Claire Pullen , published here with permission



Harvest Rituals Around the World

Harvest Season falls at different times of the year depending on the region and the crop.

From May to June in Bali, Indonesia the rice harvest festival is celebrated and honors Dewi Sri or Shridevi.

The Moon festival on the 15th day of the eight lunar month is in celebration of the harvest in China, Taiwan, and Vietnam. They prepare mooncakes and encourage the light to return.

The Ewe people of Ghana celebrate the end of the rainy season and the first appearance of their staple crop with a Yam Festival

What harvest festivals do you celebrate?

Celebrating Lughnasadh

by: Daniel Bailey

Paganism is a way of looking at and experiencing the universe grounded in natural cycles that evoke sentiments of awe, amazement, and what many refer to as sacredness. It usually, but not always, includes a perception that the universe has some kind of consciousness within it or behind it that encourages relationship, devotion, or worship, including the understanding of events and forces benefiting humans and other beings.

Many, maybe most, Pagans follow an astronomical calendar of the earth's position to the sun and moon and times of planting and harvest, including the New, Full, and Dark Moons, Solstices, and Equinoxes. UUCG's Oak Grove CUUPS group and Sylvan Sanctuary Druids follow such a calendar.

August 1st is the traditional date for Lughnasadh (Lammas or Loaf Mass/grain), the first of 3 harvest festivals celebrated for centuries in Celtic countries, the British Isles and Northern Europe. It is now also celebrated in North America and other places in the Northern Hemisphere. Here in the southeastern US we can recognize these seasons of planting and harvest.

However, given year round growing in some parts of the country and the world, celebrating the first harvest festival of Lughnasadh is important to remind us that our food and sustenance actually comes from the earth and not a grocery store! Without the earth's fecundity and bounty, we would not exist!

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Ministry of Spiritual Growth

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For those of us who believe there are divine beings and consciousness in nature, it also reminds us of our connection to what brings us love and meaning to our lives! We may become particularly reminded of our connection to the souls of plants and animals, and also to particular spirits and the emotional and spiritual harvest in our own lives!

Lughnasadh is named for the Celtic God Lugh, a god who mastered and was better at all the skills any of the other deities possessed. Since many will be returning to school as students, teachers, parents, and their supporters, learning in all forms is worth celebrating! Sports were part of the original festivities of Lughnasadh, and football and school soccer will be kicking off, baseball will enter its playoff season, and hikers will be anticipating the best time for woodland adventures!

Let's celebrate Lughnasadh for all these reasons! Sylvan Sanctuary Druids will be celebrating this time on Saturday, August 3rd at 6pm at UUCG. All are welcome to attend and participate.



- Symbols
 - Besom
 - Sickle
 - Cornucopia
 - Corn Dolls
- Herbs
 - Heather
 - Wheat
 - Frankincense
- Crystals
 - Amber
 - Aventurine
 - Golden Topaz
 - Obsidian
- Yellow, Red, Brown and Orange candles.
- Sandelwood Incense
- Bread or Wine

Share you Altar with us on FB
#UUGwinnett
IG @UUGwinnett

Oak Grove CUUPS Connecting With Trees

Meditation & Ritual

September 7th
6:00 PM-8:00 PM

Bring a light snack, a journal and a folding chair or blanket and pillow to sit on the ground.

We will be outside for the CUUPS Gathering, please bring bug spray and plenty of water to drink for this meditation.

Ministry of Spiritual Growth

Oak Grove CUUPS & Sylvan Sanctuary Summer Schedule

CUUPS Gatherings will be on hiatus till September 7th

August 3rd

Lughnasadh Ritual

At Lughnasadh we see the fields of corn being cut, and for some this is the true time of the festival. In the fields John Barleycorn, who laid with the Lady in the woods at Beltane, has grown old, and now stands bent and bearded with a crooked cane. He looks to the Sun as he has changed from green to gold, and he knows that his time has come. His life will feed the people, and it is this sacrifice that we honor at Lughnasadh.

Ritual Lead by Sylvan Sanctuary Druids

2017



2019



2022



2023



What to Bring To A Ritual

- offering to Mother Earth
- Canned goods for the Food Drive to Lawrenceville Coop
- Drums and/or other instruments to use during ritual
- A dish to share for potluck
- Your Staff or Wand
- Druid egg to place on the altar

Ministry of Spiritual Growth

Magical Arts & Crafts! Storytelling Using the Narrative Tree



What are stories? Most people would say that they are a narrative, tale or series of events that amuse, portray values or inspire ideas. Lugh was the God of stories and tales of his heroic deeds inspired many across the land to rise up for justice and community. Exploring your own story helps you to see how heroic you are and how your experiences can inspire yourself and others in your journey. With this we explore The Tree of Life Narrative writing.

The Roots - Write down where you come from on the roots. Your home town, state, country, etc. You could also put the culture/s you grew up in, organization or volunteer experience that shaped your life and people that influenced you.

The Ground - Write down the things you do on a regular basis. These should not be chores and to do list, but rather things you do for yourself, like hiking, getting a massage or pedicure.

The Trunk - Think of your skills and values and write them on the trunk. Writing your values first is helpful and then your skills, but it's different for each person.

The Branches - The branches reach out to the sky with your hopes, dreams, and wishes. They can be personal, communal, or general to the world. Write long and short term wishes all around the branches of the tree.

The Leaves - Write down those who have influenced you in a positive way. Your friends, family, writers, poets, animals, super heroes and etc.

The Fruits - What are the legacies that have been passed on to you? Look at the names you just wrote on leaves and consider the impact they have on you. It can be material objects; however, most of the time it will be characteristics and traits such as courage, compassion, curiosity, etc.

(Tip: Your tree might be a bit overloaded by this point, try drawing some fruit at the base of your tree and label them accordingly there.)

The Flowers & Seeds - Write down the legacies you wish to leave behind on the flowers and seeds.

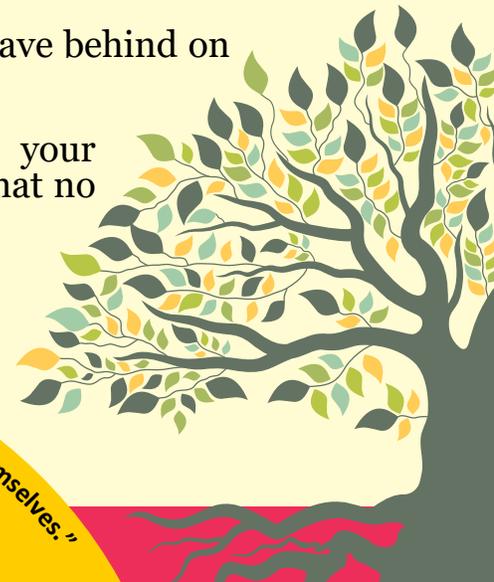
The Compost Pile (Optional) - Write down anything in your compost heap that you no longer want to be defined by, things that no longer serve your story.

Now Write your beautiful Story and share them with us!

Submit your stories to admin@uucg.org for possible publication in the next issue of the GNUUS!

"I'm writing my story so that others might see fragments of themselves."

Lena Waithe



Ministry of Spiritual Growth

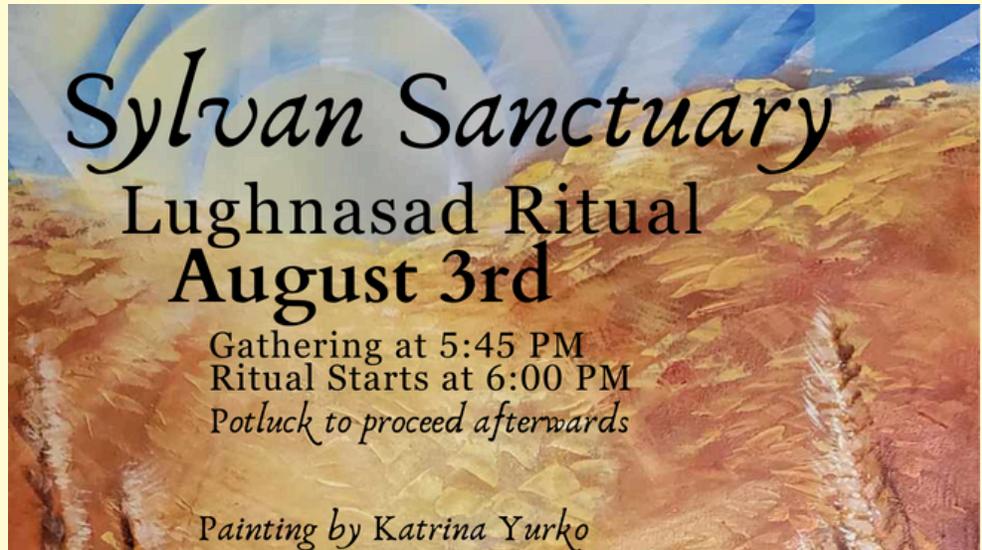
Beleif Explorers

August 11th at 12:30pm

Connecting Cosmology,
Evolution and Spirituality

Many cosmologists and theologians have tried to merge, harmonize, or connect science and religion. We will discuss some of the main thought pathways with most emphasis on the work of Pierre Teilhard du Chardin, an early 20th century Jesuit Priest, theologian and paleontologist. He is best known for his work on the concept of the Noosphere, a postulated sphere or stage of evolutionary development: "creatures evolve: a new biosphere emerges, and with it a new noosphere". While this may seem to be an esoteric topic, at its core, it suggests what changes may be necessary in humanity's world view to assure the survival of future generations.

Facilitated by Terry Welsher



Lughnasadh Ritual

By Bob Patrick (he/him)

This ritual has been accruing many rich elements over the years, and that's a good sign. Historically, it was the festival of regathering of the clans after a summer of farming, tending the flocks and creating an abundance of food and resources for the coming winter. Believe it or not, we have been in the darkening half of the year for 5 weeks now.

Here's what's going on in this ritual:

- beginning our third year of honoring Mother Earth with an altar of offering
- bringing canned goods for the Lawrenceville coop.
- creating Loves Lists to place on our home altars for prayer and healing work
- writing down a commitment to something that needs reconciling and casting it into a Lughnasadh fire
- reinvesting our four talismans on our altar with the energies they hold for us all year long.
- doing our working for healing, help, guidance and wisdom for all who participate.

And there is a very special event going on in this ritual. Over the years, I developed a Nine Waves of Blessing ritual for babies born to any of our members. We have used it twice over the last 15 years. The ritual is based on what is found in the Carmina Gadelica, a 19th century collection of rituals, prayers, spells et al from Scotland that are believed to pre-date Christianity there.

Ministry of Connecting Within

Ongoing Connecting Within Opportunities

For more info, check out the CW bulletin board located beside the Library entrance!

Alphabet SoUUp - In Person: 1st Monday at 6:30

Chalice Circle - monthly meeting set by members

Book Club - Online 4th Wednesday from 7-9 pm

Yarns from the Heart - Online 1st and 3rd Wednesday

QUUest - Adults: In Person: 1st Friday at 6pm, 4th Friday at 6pm Online:, 3rd Friday at 7 pm

QUUest Jr. - Youth: In Person: 2nd Friday at 7pm

Spiral Scouts - In Person 2nd Sunday following Sunday service

Music Night - In Person every Thursday night starting at 6:30

Men's Group (inclusive) - In Person 2nd Saturdays in person at 9 am

Upcoming Attractions:

Covenant Groups - Registration opens in September!

Book Group August 28 at 7pm

We choose books across various genres, with an eye toward what will provide substantial topics for discussion. When possible, we try to choose titles that are available at the Gwinnett County Public Library so that everyone can have access to the book. We have found that some of our favorite books have been those that have wide appeal.

[Learn More...](#)

Ministry of Connecting Within

Covenant Groups

Join us for a reimagination of covenant groups as a year long program.

There are three session options

- 2nd and 4th Mondays (via Zoom)
- 2nd Wednesdays (in-person)
- 2nd and 4th Thursdays (via Zoom)

In this year long model, you will only need to register once for the entire program year.

Register Here



Sharing the Journey



SEPT 15, 29

OCT 13, 27

Sharing the Journey is a 4-session program for both newcomers and long-time members to experience “deep listening and sharing practices” in a small group setting, while reconnecting with your UU faith and values.



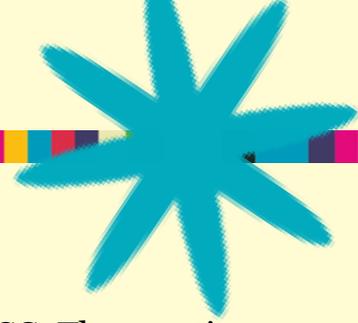
REGISTER HERE

LOVE IS  LOVE

ALPHABET SOUP
Monday, August 5th at 6:30 PM
UUCG Library

New monthly potluck social & discussion group for LGBTQIA+ attendees of UUCG!

Ministry of Connecting Within



Why Commit to Covenant Group?

by Lisa Kiel (she/her)

Recently I was asked why I feel Covenant Groups should be offered here at UUCG. The question shocked me. Since I've been here, we've always had Covenant Groups, of course we need Covenant Groups! I've actually written about Covenant Groups here in my monthly column several times, usually when registration is drawing near (and yes, registration is drawing near). I've always emphasized how these groups encourage us to build relationships as we get to know each other better. I wholeheartedly believe this, but I also believe Covenant Groups are more than just a convenient way to meet people.

To me, Covenant Groups offer us the essence of what it is to live an Unitarian Universalist life. Within the circle we are asked to make space for all as we listen in silence to the truths of others. This deep listening leads to deep understanding about others and about ourselves. We discover new ways to practice our faith, internally, and externally in the world surrounding us. We are challenged to reconsider long held beliefs and to form new beliefs that reflect the ever evolving people we are becoming, and we often learn much of this from those we once perceived as "so different" from ourselves. Every time we come together, we are given the opportunity to embrace our Unitarian Universalist values, put action behind the words of our covenant and engage in the practice of love.

Our Covenant Groups are returning in September. This year we'll be adapting Covenant Groups to reflect the changing needs of our growing community. It can take a lot of courage to change something we've become accustomed to, but isn't being courageous part of our mission? So come to Covenant Groups this year ready to be valued, inspired and challenged as we get serious about practicing this thing we call Unitarian Universalism.

Blessed Be!

Lisa



Somewhere we know that without silence words lose their meaning, that without listening speaking no longer heals, that without distance closeness cannot cure.

Henri Nouwen

Art By Elune Caban (she/her)

Ministry of Connecting Within



We Need You to Register!

We need every single household to register for the upcoming programming year.

This information is vital to keeping our database and directory accurate, and also our demographic reports to the UUA accurate.

Email cfm@uucg.org if you have any questions.

[Register here](#)



Wi\$dom Path

Join Ian Van Sice, MS Financial Planning, for a twelve-session program in which we discuss more than just financial literacy; we will delve into our relationship with money, money in society, and how faith and money are connected.

The Wi\$dom Path comprises twelve 90-minute workshops, arranged around three themes: Money and Self; Money and Society; and Money, Spirit, and Life. Participants build awareness of their own “money story” and explore their own attitudes and experiences with money. You will explore the ways in which money connects us with others, including issues of classism and economic justice as well as money issues in congregational life, then delve into ways to align faith, values, and a sense of a life calling with our financial ways of being.

This offering of The Wi\$dom Path is a drop-in program. Plan to attend all 12 sessions or any among them that interest you. No registration is required. Gatherings will start at 7 pm and meet for 90-minutes on the following Monday evenings:

Aug 19, Sept 2, Sept 16, Sept 30, Oct 14, Nov 4, Nov 18, Dec 2, Dec 16, Jan 6, Jan 20. Feb 3

This program is open to all members and friends of UUCG and your own friends and family! Please invite folks close to you who you think will be interested in this content to attend with you or on their own by sharing the Zoom link with them.



**The
Wi\$dom
Path**
& Self
& Society
& Spirit
& Life

First session on
August 19th

Ministry of Connecting Beyond

Lay Minister Message

by *Candice Carver sShe/her*)

As the Lay Minister for Connecting Beyond, my primary mission is to foster and strengthen relationships within and beyond our community, both past and present. My vision is to create a vibrant and interconnected community where every member feels valued and engaged beyond our Sunday service.

I started to practice Paganry as a solitary pagan about 15 years ago in Charleston. I found being Pagan was comfortable to me and I dove into learning as much as I could about various traditions, cultures, and pagan practices. This allowed me to encompass the paths that spoke to my soul. I moved to Duluth in 2018 with my best friend and joined our congregation in February of 2019 after joining CUUPS and Sylvan Sanctuary.

I became more active as we came out of the pandemic and started to open our doors. When I started to look at my path with UUCG, it became very clear that I had a deep desire to become a worship service leader to not just tell my story but also to inspire people to live into our values. I felt I could also do this as a Lay Minister. When I was asked to serve on the Board of Trustees, I decided at that time to be on the BOT for 2 years and then transition onto the Shared Ministry Council and Worship Associates Team.

I can't tell you why I wanted to become Lay Minister of Connecting Beyond, just that it was the most natural fit for me. I enjoy making connections outside of the congregation to expand our community. I have a desire to bring attention to the injustices to fat, plump, husky, and medically-correct "overweight" voices in our community - myself being among that community. I desire to forge a connection with Indigenous People for cultural bonding, education, and to build a relationship based on love and gratitude. I want to re-forge our relationships with past connections such as Corley Elementary, El Refugio, and others. And of course, maintain our bonds with current connections brought forth by the congregation such as the Gwinnett Adoptive Foster Parents Association and the Lawrenceville Food Co-op.

I hope that my time as Lay Minister for Connecting Beyond can grow our congregation, not just physically but spiritually. I have found a spiritual connection with social justice that I hope can spread like wildfire (in a good way) to others in our congregation and out in our community.

With Love, Peace and Courage in my Heart,
CC Carver



Ministry of Connecting Beyond



**BECOME A
GOOD TROUBLE
CONGREGATION**

[Click here for more](https://uuthevote.org/goodtroublecongregation/)

<https://uuthevote.org/goodtroublecongregation/>



Art Contest: \$750 prize!

Three commemorative art pieces will be selected based on the following themes.

- Love at the Center
- Reimagining Together
- Abolitionist Visions of Climate Justice

The artist for each winning piece will receive a \$750 award.

Learn more & enter at bit.ly/RevivalArtContestInfo



JOIN AN ONLINE PHONEBANK EVENT!

August 27th 7PM to 9PM ET
September 3rd 7PM to 9PM ET
September 10th 7PM to 9PM ET
September 17th 7PM to 9PM ET
September 24th 7PM to 9PM ET

REGISTER AT
www.uuthevote.org/events



Ministry of Connecting Beyond

Peace Festivals



submitted by Bruce Leonard (he/him)

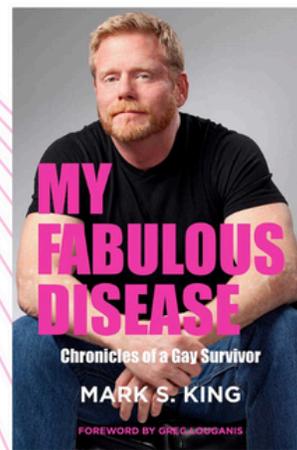
The Gwinnett Interfaith Alliance (GIA) is promoting Peace Festivals to take place quarterly on the seasonal Equinoxes and Solstices. At each seasonal festival a group of different faiths in the alliance will be highlighted; sharing music, food, and a presentation by the spiritual leaders of their respective belief systems followed by a discussion.

The first festival will be held on **September 21**, the United Nations International Day of Peace, and the Autumn Equinox.. The highlighted faiths (Sikh, Pagan, Unitarian Universalist, Muslim) will organize committees working together on food, music, discussion groups, and as many activities as the faith groups would like to organize. Optional activities could include but are not limited to addressing climate change, civil conversation skills, incorporating different faith rituals when appropriate, yoga, and massage. During future festivals other faiths in the alliance will be highlighted.

Our next planning meeting will take place on **August 11** at UUCG and on Zoom. Please plan to join members of the Gwinnett Interfaith Alliance and our own team of planners to help make these festivals a success.

REIMAGINE TOGETHER
From an Extractive Age to a New Era
UU Climate Justice Revival
September 28-29, 2024
UUClimateJustice.org

Honoring HIV/AIDS Survivors and the Writing of Mark S. King



**Thursday,
August 8, 2024**

**Reception: 6:30 pm
Program: 7:00 pm**

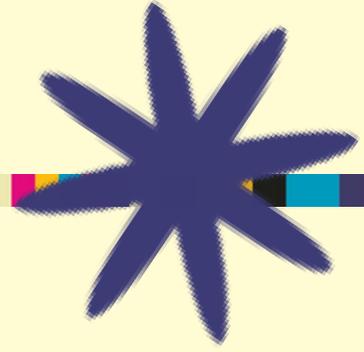
The event is free & ticketed.



999 Brady Ave NW
Atlanta, GA 30318



Staff Hours



Rev. Nancy Palmer Jones, Minister, revnpj@uucg.org

678-558-4834

Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays: 10:00 am. - 4:00 pm

First and Third Saturdays: 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Summer considerations:

- August 5-11: Study Break

Christiana McQuain, Coordinator of Family Ministries,

cmcquain@uucg.org

Tuesdays, 9:00am-4:00pm; Fridays (on-site), 9:00am-2:00pm;

most Sundays (on-site) 8:30am-2:00pm

Aline Harris, Office Administrator, aharris@uucg.org

Tuesdays 9:30 am-1:00 pm; Fridays (on-site) 10:00 am-1:00 pm;

most Sundays (on-site) 10:30 am-12:30 pm

Michael Parker, Choir Director, choirdirector@uucg.org

Office hours (on-site) Tuesdays, 1:00pm-6:00pm, by appointment

Becca Parker, Choir Director, choirdirector@uucg.org

On-site Sunday mornings (except 4th Sundays)

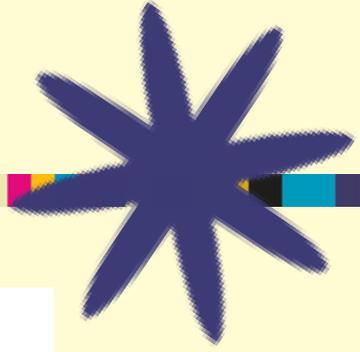
LaTreisha McKay, Bookkeeper, lmckay@uucg.org

Available for communication on Monday evenings, 5:00-8:00pm



ALL UUCG STAFF ARE PART-TIME, PLEASE RESPECT THEIR HOURS

FUUn



Puzzle created by Aline Harris (she/they)

Word Ladder

Each rung on the ladder will be a four letter word where one letter is changed from the previous rung

Clue 1: November must do

Clue 2: _____ to self

Clue 3: it sometimes blows

Clue 4: not win but _____

Clue 5: it's at the center (though at the end of this puzzle)

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Three recently-dead people are at the Pearly Gates. The angel asks the first, "What was your faith?" He says, Catholic. And did you go to confession? Oh, yes, every week. Ok, go on in. The second is Jewish. "Did you make a pilgrimage to the Wailing Wall?" "Yes I did, just last year at last!" "Ok, enter." The last declares that they are Unitarian. The angel asks, "And did you bring a hot dish to share?"

-Thanks to the UU Hysterical Society