



April 2025

Gwinnett News for Unitarian Universalists

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Female GNUs give birth to one calf in the center of the herd, rather than finding an isolated place, this increases the survival rate of the calf.

Living Love Through The Practice of Joy

What is there to say about Joy in these challenging times? Is it enough to remind ourselves of the imperative to seek it out, even when it feels like it's so deeply concealed beneath the everyday realities that we may never find it?

While it's crucial to acknowledge the peril of the moment, it is also imperative to remember that there are ways to cultivate joy in this very same moment. With intention, reflect on what it is that uplifts and truly nourishes your spirit. Is it time spent in nature? Engaging in some creative activity - writing, cooking, knitting,... - that reminds you that there is hope abiding all around you? Is it communing with friends? Is it centering love in all you do?

There is joy in being together. There is joy in knowing that we are not alone in our struggles and concerns. Joy is not just the destination we are striving to reach, Joy is the journey.

Join us this month for an exploration of The Practice of Joy in programs, activities, and Worship.

Welcome to
the practice of

JOY!



Worship in April

Sundays at 11:00am

Theme: Living Love through the
Practice of Joy

Join us in-person or via Zoom

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



April 6th

Surprised by Joy

Is joy a guest we have invited in for a moment or more, or is it something unexpected and unpredictable? Is joy a hidden gem just waiting for us to discover? Or is joy a creation that we all have the capacity to make? We launch this month of learning to Live Love Through the Practice of Joy with stories about when, where, how, and why joy shows up in our lives.

Rev. Nancy Palmer Jones (She/Her), Service Leader

April 13th

Finding Joy in Simple Things

Our Worship Services are weekly reflections that weave together our own thoughts and experiences with music, beauty, poetry, and words that both comfort and challenge. Join us as we gather to explore The Practice of Joy and worship together.

LaDonna Pacer (She/Her), Service Leader

April 20th

There's a Reason to Rejoice!

On this Sunday, we celebrate both Easter and Earth Day, creating a vision of freedom, beauty, and health to guide us forward. Whether you are online or in person, please bring a flower to share in our Flower Ceremony!

Rev. Nancy Palmer Jones (She/Her), Service Leader

April 27th

The Rite of Spring

You are cordially invited to witness the sacred union of The Flower Maiden & The Green Man in the The Dance of Life Beltane Celebration.

Join us as we celebrate the joyous handfasting of the Goddess and God, a symbol of love, abundance, and the fertile embrace of summer.

Candice Carver (She/Her), Service Leader

Programs

**Sundays at
12:30pm**

1st Sunday, 4/6

- Faith Development:
Visualizing Your Values
- Potluck Lunch

2nd Sunday, 4/13

- Belief Explorers
- Spiral Scouts (pre-registration required)

3rd Sunday, 4/20

- Sunday Tarot

4th Sunday, 4/27

- "Good Trouble"
- The Open Circle
(Women's Group)





Worship and More

Worship Services
Sundays at 11:00am
March Theme:

Living Love through The Practice of Joy
Join us in-person or via Zoom
<https://zoom.us/j/565460176>

How are you practicing Joy?

April is...



National
VOLUNTEER
Month



National
Poetry
Month

National Month
of HOPE



Special Service: Flower Ceremony



Looking Ahead...



Founders' Day
a celebration of UUCG
Sunday, May 4th



The Desk of Rev. Nancy



You'll Know Why the Birds Sing

by Rev. Nancy Palmer Jones (she/her)



On a brisk spring day in Woodstock, New York, I find myself on a repurposed bus parked beside a grassy air strip. I am watching a video introduction to skydiving.

My sweetheart is already up in the air getting ready for his first jump of the day. A former paratrooper during his required service with the Italian army, he has made thousands of jumps. For me, skydiving is on my bucket list, but I've come on this trip with no expectation that I'll actually take the leap.

Yet here I am, "on the bus." I'm required to watch a video before I can sign up to take a tandem jump, where I'll be strapped to the front of a professional skydiver.

I'm terrified. To take part in the experience, I have to sign a waiver that says I know I might be injured or die, even if the odds are as low as they can be. The reality of the risk I'm taking is impossible to avoid. My heart still races when I remember sitting on that bus.

Still, there comes a moment in the video when the camera shows what it looks like to float through the air under the parachute. "Once you try it," the narrator says, "you'll know why the birds sing."

That's all I need to hear. I sign up, I take the jump, and it is indeed a terrifying and transcendent experience. I don't need to do it again, mind you—but it's true: floating down through the air, gazing on miles of land and sky, feeling cradled yet free ... it does make me want to sing, both then and now.

This memory comes to me now as I invite us to go looking for joy during this month of April. It may feel risky to allow joy to enter in when there are



photo by Engin Yapici, Creative Commons

fear, and trouble, and threat in the air. But joy, as an affirmation of our right to live fully and wholeheartedly, is an effective lifesaving response of solidarity and resistance. It is a gateway to Love.

Let's start with something simple: Some morning soon, throw open your window or move outside and listen for the birdsong. Sure, their songs carry many meanings. But for me, and I hope for you, they always bring joy.

With Love for our journey into joy,

Rev. Nancy

Practicing Joy...

Beyond Sunday Morning

Some ways to engage in The Practice of Joy throughout the month of April

You are invited to choose one or more of the following practices as a way to engage with discovering Joy this month. Then share your experiences one Sunday at church or in our Facebook Group.

Your Box of Joy

We all travel roads that turn long and lonely sometimes. We make it through such stretches of loss and struggle only because of the joy we carry with us and within us. It's like having a box of remembered joy that we can draw from for sustenance and strength. This exercise invites you to think about what you want to put in your "box."

Make a list or poem of what brings you joy. Fill it with past memories as well as current ones. Take your time with it. Maybe even fill it up over a matter of days. The hard part will be keeping your joy list/poem to a single page! Seeking inspiration? [Find some here.](#)

What surprised you about what made it into your box?

The Many Types of Joy

We often underestimate the amount of joy in our lives. So, remind yourself by going back through all the photos on your camera, phone, or computer from the past year and pick out one for each type of joy you can think of.

Besides helping you realize how blessed you are with joy; it will enable you to think more deeply about how you relate to joy. And with a better ability to name different forms of joy, the better you will be able to notice them when they show up in your life.

Spend some time reflecting on which new types of joy you discovered!



Photo by Nancy Palmer Jones

Ask About Joy

One of the best ways to explore our monthly themes is to have conversations about them with people who are close to you. It's also a great way to deepen our relationships! Below is a list of questions to help you on your way. Be sure to let your conversation partner know in advance that this won't be a typical conversation, and if they're not a church friend, telling them a bit about UU may help frame the context. Remember to also answer the questions yourself as they are meant to support a two (or more)-way conversation. Notice what surprises you about the conversation and what gift or insight it gave you. As always, keep a lookout for how your inner voice is trying to send you a message of comfort or challenge through these conversions with others.

Joy Questions

- What do you find joyful that few others do?
- What is your third favorite way to welcome in joy?
- Has choosing joy ever been an act of survival for you? Or an act of defiance?
- When was the last time you sought out joy for your body?
- What joyful memory has been with you the longest, showing up regularly like a long-time friend?
- What's something you know now about joy that you didn't know when you were younger?

From the Board



THE ROOF ABOVE OUR HEADS

by Lorena Gay-Griffin, Secretary, UUCG Board of Trustees

Our new roof is imminent. Last fall, with the adoption of the budget, you voted to sell a portion of our cell phone tower land lease in order to fund building-related expenses. One of the biggest of those expenses was a total roof renovation. We've fought roof leaks for years but had no money to pay for a true overhaul. With the funds from this sale, we can now fix it right. Those repairs will take place in late May or early June, in coordination with the schedule of our tenant, the Friendship Forest school. Sunday services will continue during the renovation, though things may be a little chaotic for a service or two.

Following roof repairs, we will pay off our mortgage, as well as our Endowment loan. While we will receive less money from the cell phone tower company that leases our land, we will no longer have to make payments to cover these loans. This will enable us to use an additional \$12,500 annually for operating expenses. The remainder of the sale money will go into a special reserve fund that may only be accessed for future building needs.

We'll update you on actual costs when all is complete, but here's a reminder from our budget presentation:

- Revenue from partial sale of cell phone tower land lease + \$200,000
- Expense to pay for roof repair - \$ 65,650
- Expense to pay off mortgage and endowment loan - \$ 68,134
- Remaining amount to go into building reserve fund +\$ 66,216

Thank you for your trust in the Board. This financial reallocation will go a long way towards keeping our Blue Boat Home at 12 Bethesda Church Road happy, healthy and dry.



Congregational Meetings in May: Slate of Nominees & Policy Review

The Board of Trustees and the Nominating Committee will present the 2025-26 Nominees on May 4th at 12:30 pm.

We will also present our biennial Review of Policies for feedback. This will be a Potluck Sunday, and the Board will also be discussing our Open Question, *"How do we as a congregation live into our shared UU values in our daily lives in the larger world?"*



The Congregational Business Meeting to vote for the 2025-26 Board of Trustees and Nominating Committee will be held on May 18th at 12:30 pm.

From the Endowment Fund

Endowment Fund Report - 2025

by Doug Beers, Chair, UUCG Endowment Fund

UUA

General Assembly June 18-23, 2025

General Assembly (GA) is the annual meeting of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), where participants gather to worship, witness, learn, connect, and make policy decisions for the Association through a democratic process.

This year's 64th UUA General Assembly will be a multi-platform event, with the main stage hosted at the Baltimore Convention Center in Baltimore, Maryland.



Are you interested in representing UUCG as a delegate to General Assembly? Reach out to Board@uucg.org

The UUCG Endowment Fund Inc. was very pleased to pass the \$100,000 mark in 2024. That was a number that seemed almost unreachable when the Fund was incorporated in 1997.

We finished the year with a growth of Net Asset Value of \$17641.64. It would have been greater, but recent end of year pullbacks in the stock market cost us a little over \$6,000. That still represents an 18% growth for 2024. The bulk of our funds are invested in the UUA Common Endowment fund in Boston (a socially responsible investment group).

Here's the numbers for 2024:

Unrestricted Donations \$16,815.43

Birthday Club Donations \$917.00

Memorial Donations \$600.00

Operating expenses \$1029.73

(Legal, Memorial Garden, Grants)

2023 End of year 90,019.12

2024 End of year \$107,660.76

Net Gain \$17,641.64

Per our by-law structure, we will have \$1,322.47 available for grants during 2025. Grant application forms are available online at UUCG.

We encourage you to continue to make Birthday Club donations in the amount matching the number of years you are celebrating. If you have questions about making estate donations, memorial or other donations, please contact Doug Beers. We thank all of you for the continued long-term stewardship that will provide for UUCG in the future.

Periodically, the UUCG Endowment Fund offers grants to members of the congregation to attend and participate in conferences, conventions, and trainings hosted by the UUA or the UUA Southern Region. The purpose of these grants is to ensure that the financial status of any individual member is not a barrier to participation in engagement with spiritual growth opportunities or the business of our Association. If you would like to apply for a grant to attend General Assembly and serve as a delegate representing UUCG, please reach out to endowment@uucg.org.



Give
Away
the
Plate

The Give Away the Plate recipient for the second quarter of 2025 will be Familias Juntas

Familias Juntas is “a coalition of concerned Gwinnett County individuals and faith communities, whose goal is to assist immigrants in danger of or affected by family separation, due to inhumane immigration policies.” It consists of members from UUCG and The Nett Church, plus additional volunteers.

Currently the focus is on helping families prepare for the possibility of immigration detention or deportation by arranging for the care of their children in their absence. If U.S. Border Czar Tom Homan has his way, “As far as U.S. children — children, that’s going to be a difficult situation, because we’re not going to detain your U.S. citizen children, which means, you know, they’re going to be put in a halfway house.”

In order to avoid adding to children’s trauma of family separation, Familias Juntas is working NOW with undocumented immigrants to enable them to make custody arrangements. This way, if needed, their children will be cared for by a trusted friend of family member, named by the parents.

Familias Juntas holds document clinics with lawyers, notaries, and interpreters to prepare Power of Attorney for Childcare and/or Temporary Guardianship documents. The model being used is to work through Latino church congregations, since promoting events publicly could lead to unsympathetic people in attendance.

Your donations will go towards covering printing/copying expenses, plus hospitality for attendees. In the future, the group’s focus will shift to supporting those children who are left behind. Learn more about Familias Juntas at www.familiasjuntas.org or talk with Lorena Griffin.



Our congregation is committed to creating a more compassionate world.

**For more than a decade, UUCG has shared our plate collection 50/50
with an organization nominated by members of the community
and selected by our Give Away the Plate Committee.**

Nominations are accepted on a rolling basis, and are open now.

**If you know of a worthy non-profit organization
that shares Unitarian Universalist values and serves our local community,
please send an email to GiveAwayThePlate@uucg.org**

**If you are interested in serving on the Committee, please reach out to
Board@uucg.org to express your interest and learn more.**

Ministry of Radical Welcome



Joy as an Act of Resistance

by Carol Underwood, Lay Minister for Radical Welcome

In the work of Radical Welcome this month, I am contemplating the lens of JOY. The first thing people see when they walk into our doors for the first time

is the smile and warm welcome of the greeters. The times I have been that greeter, I think of the utter joy on people's faces when they are welcomed into the church. It was what brought me into this community. The joy people have in this congregation really stands out from other experiences I have had from other faith communities. Joy can really become a profound act of resistance. It resists fear, exclusion, and division, and instead embraces the richness of diversity and the beauty of human connection. Together we rise and resist the exclusionary behaviors that tear us apart. We need to see that joy in our diversity, not just tolerating but actively celebrating differences. A nice practice would be to greet each other with authentic warmth. It is something contagious. Joy can welcome people where we all grow together into a diverse community. It was this community that taught me the authenticity of life and community. I remember the sign I saw many times when I first started attending regularly. **"You are welcome here"**.



Coffee Hour Invitation

Help us make our Coffee Hour after Service even more welcoming by bringing snacks to share!

Please label your container with your name so we can offer our gratitude.

While we love sweet treats, we also welcome:

- Fresh fruits & veggies
- Gluten-free options
- Vegan & vegetarian items



Your contributions help create a nourishing and inclusive space for all.

Thank you!

Ministry of Radical Welcome

Hospitality Highlight Thank You for Your Dedication

We offer heartfelt gratitude to Peggy Averyt for her bountiful spirit and generosity in so many aspects of service to the UUCG community.

Peggy, a founding member of the Congregation, has served in myriad roles over the years. From Board member to Membership Chair, to Lay Minister; Peggy's leadership has shaped the direction of the ministries of UUCG in profoundly positive ways. In Peggy's ongoing role as a Greeter, she fills the foyer on Sunday mornings with a warm and robust spirit of welcome, greeting all who cross our threshold with her inviting smile and abundant kindness.

We love you and we appreciate you, Peggy, and all of the gifts and talents that you bring to UUCG.



Help Create a Culture of Care: Join Hospitality!

- Bring treats to share
- Make coffee
- Assist with organizing the treats brought for Coffee Hour
- Set out items on the coffee cart
- Wash mugs
- Put away coffee cart
- Launder tablecloths or hand towels
- Assist with potluck on first Sundays
- Or any of the many other ways to serve!

April is National Volunteer Month. Which of your gifts will you share with the UUCG community as we Create a Culture of Care with and for each other?

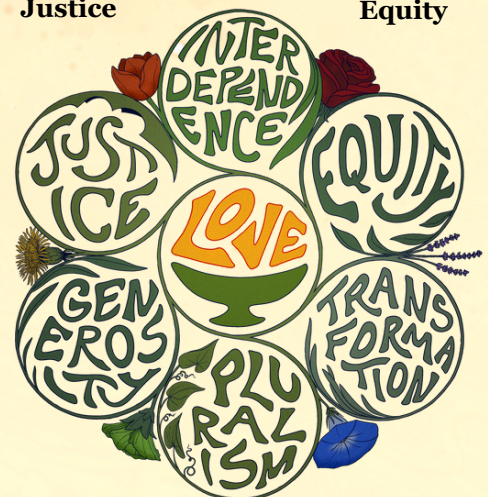
Love is the power that holds us together and is at the center of our shared values.

We are accountable to one another for doing the work of living our shared values through the spiritual discipline of Love.

Inseparable from one another,
these shared values are:

Interdependence
Generosity
Justice

Transformation
Pluralism
Equity



UU Values graphic by Claire Pullen

Ministry of Radical Welcome

The Joy of Radical Hospitality

by Candice Carver

When I was a young girl, about seven or eight years old, I attended a large summer camp run by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Northeast Texas. Every morning, I rode the bus to the massive campus where my grade met in a spacious gym. Rows of tables were lined up for crafts, meals, and learning. We spent our days immersed in activities until around 4 PM, when I was supposed to board the bus back home.

But one day, I didn't make it onto that bus. I had spent hours holding the door open for the many people entering and exiting the building. To me, it wasn't just a task—it was an act of service, a joy. I greeted each person with a smile, said hello, and found myself engaged in brief but meaningful moments of connection. By the time I realized how much time had passed, my bus was long gone. My mother had to drive to the camp to pick me up. Though she was upset, she couldn't ignore my dedication to kindness and service. It was simply a part of who I was, and still am.

Radical hospitality has always been second nature to me. There is a deep joy in welcoming people, in striking up conversations, and in genuinely caring about the stories they carry.

Whether in a congregation, a gathering, or even a chance meeting at the store, I find fulfillment in learning about others—their journeys, their joys, and their struggles. But radical hospitality isn't just about listening; it's also about sharing. When we welcome others, we also invite them into our own world. We share our experiences, our joys, and our community's vision. We extend an invitation not just to a space, but to a sense of belonging.

In our congregation, I see radical hospitality as more than a greeting at the door. It is in the conversations over coffee, the genuine curiosity about someone's life, and the warmth of shared experiences. It is in encouraging others to join in service, to take part in the joy of stewardship, and to know that they, too, are valued and needed. Radical hospitality is an active practice, one that fosters connection and builds something greater than any one of us could create alone.

The world can sometimes feel isolating, and many people are searching for a place to feel seen, heard, and embraced. Radical hospitality is an antidote to that isolation. It is the act of not just welcoming, but of truly making space for others in our hearts and lives. It is a practice of joy, generosity, and love.

As I reflect on my journey, from that little girl holding the door open to the community leader I am today, I know that radical hospitality is not just what I do—it is who I am. And in practicing it, I find a deeper sense of purpose and joy.

What does radical hospitality look like in your life, and how has it shaped the way you connect with others?



Photo by Lydia Patrick

Ministry of Green Space



Great Green Get together - March 21st

By Gary Kiel, Lay Minister for Green Space

The G3Ts occur every 3 months. In the past they were movies. This time we are discussing the bird id app. The Green Space members have used the Merlin bird identification app to identify birds by their calls. Members scanned their yard or took a trip to the park to gather a collection of species. On the 21st we will share our findings.

The Merlin Bird ID app is the work of The Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

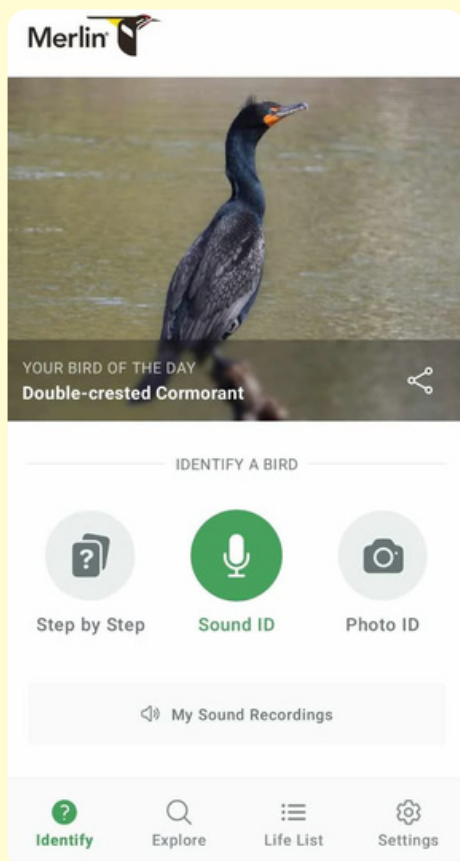
It is a wonderful, free app that can be loaded from Google Play or Apple App Store. Here is a web link:

<https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/>

Identify Bird Songs and Calls with Sound ID

Sound ID listens to the birds around you and shows real-time suggestions for who's singing. Compare your recording to the songs and calls in Merlin to confirm what you heard.

[More About Sound ID](#)



Supported regions

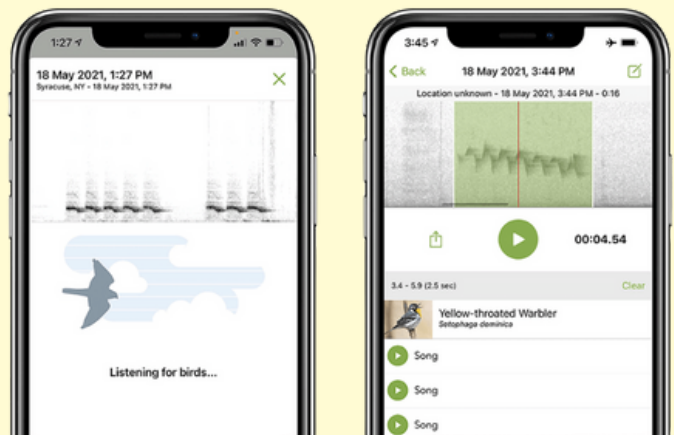
Sound ID in the Merlin Bird ID app is currently available for 1,382 species of birds. This includes comprehensive coverage in the United States, Canada, Europe, and the Western Palearctic, and coverage of more common and widespread species in India and the Neotropics.



You can help Merlin Sound ID add new species and expand to new areas by making sound recordings, uploading them to eBird checklists, and tagging the background species audible in the recording.

Merlin Sound ID is powered by smartphone recordings, so anybody with a smartphone has everything needed to make recordings and help! The Macaulay Library's [smartphone recording tips](#) are a great place to get started.

I don't expect you to find all 1,382 bird species! There are only 612 in the US and Canada.



The Merlin Bird ID app is the work of The Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

It is a wonderful, free app that can be loaded from Google Play or Apple App Store. Here is a web link: www.merlin.allaboutbirds.org

Ministry of Green Space

Property Beautification in March

Great action photos of the Property Beautification team in action. The overgrown areas in front of the building are showing a marked improvement.

We have the overgrowth on the run - ha, ha ha! You *will* learn to behave.

Property Beautification



Next Property Beautification Day: April 5

Name That Toad

This Toad is becoming our Green Space mascot.

Entries so far... voting has not happened at time of writing.



1. Warty McFly
2. Hopscotch
3. Kermit
4. Eddie (after John Edwards Holbrook, associated w/ describing this toad in 1836)
5. Kore
6. Terra (or Terrance if a Mr. Toad)

Ministry of Green Space

Green Space in Worship

Last Month:

- March 16, 2025 - Green Team Reflection. Candice presented a service based on Persephone. Gary offered a reflection that describes the Green Team and welcomes the spring.
- March 30, 2025 - Shark Whisperer. Lydia presented a service centered around the theme of Trust. Gary offered a reflection on trust extended through the animal world.

This Month:

- April 20, 2025 - Rev. Nancy is planning an Earth Day-themed service on Easter Sunday. The Green Team is offering two reflections for the service.



UUCG Wildlife

Carolina Anole - American Chameleon

Anolis carolinensis or green anole (US: /əˈnoʊ.li/ ⓘ) (among other names below) is a tree-dwelling species of anole lizard native to the southeastern United States and introduced to islands in the Pacific and Caribbean. A small to medium-sized lizard, the green anole is a trunk-crown ecomorph and can change its color to several shades from brown to green.

Other names include the Carolina anole, Carolina green anole, American anole, American green anole, North American green anole and red-throated anole. It is commonly called chameleon in the southeastern United States and sometimes referred to as the American chameleon (typically in the pet trade) due to its color-changing ability; however, it is not a true chameleon.



This friendly lizard was hanging out at the keyhole garden.
He jumped into the basket of Karen Smith's tools.

Ministry of Spiritual Growth

Lydia Patrick, Lay Minister for Spiritual Growth

April is National Poetry Month



When You Remember Me

By Steve Babb

For all the detainees who have died at Stewart Detention Center

When you remember me, don't think of me
As what this place tried to reduce me to:
A man devoid of hope and dignity
A scarecrow stripped of all he loved and knew.

Don't picture me abandoned in a cell
To face alone the tricks that my mind played
Or packed with others, innocents in hell,
Defenseless as the fever had its way.

No, think of me the way I used to be
When I was full of health and joy and fire
Before this dismal warehouse swallowed me
And circumscribed my world with razor wire.

Imagine me the day that I set out
On the long journey that I made for you
Before my lofty plans gave way to doubt
While my idealism still shone through.

Don't let this evil place have the last word
Don't let it make the life I lived a lie
Recall me as a man who, undeterred,
Refused to let himself be brutalized,
Would not accept that his dreams were absurd,
And thought of you, and fought, until he died.

So gather with me now and take my hands
And speak their names, and let the echoes rise --
Jeancarlo, Efrain, and Yulio,
Roberto, Santiago, and Freddy,
Pedro, Cipriano, and Felipe -- as we stand
On haunted ground, beneath a hollow sky,
We pledge we won't let demagogues deny
That your lives mattered, that we'll keep alive
Your memories of better days, and strive
To set your pinioned spirits free to fly.

Join Us!

Volunteer
Opportunities
include:

Beacons, Worship
Associates, Service
Leaders, Covenant
Choir, Sweet MUUsic,
and Faith Development
Programs

We look forward to
serving alongside you!



Faith Development

Tending the Flame

by Christiana Fernandez-McQuain, Coordinator of Family Ministries

On March 23rd the Worship Service included a practical safety drill, in which all present on-site at UUCG participated. The children's program that morning consisted of a discussion about how and why we can trust that we have the ability to care for ourselves and each other, and to keep ourselves and each other safe. We also shared some breathing practices that can serve to reduce anxiety during moments of personal or group stress.

Most of the children are already familiar with the concept and practices of similar kinds of drills, as they perform them in school. All of the children handled our drill very well.

I tried, in the aftermath of the practical drill that morning, to touch base with each of the parents of the children that were present and in our care, just to see how that felt - knowing that in the event of an incident or emergency that your children were in our care and the safest thing you could do for them and yourself was to trust that they were cared for and safe. As a mother, I know that that can feel counter intuitive, and some of you reflected that you felt the same in those moments, on that morning. If I did not have a chance to talk to you and you would like to express how that was for you, please reach out to me to have that conversation. Know that I support you and want to hear from you about how we create a safe atmosphere for your family here at UUCG.

As we strive to Create a Culture of Care that extends to all in our congregation, it is important to honor those feelings of ambiguity and fear, especially as we put in place measures, policies, and procedures that hold safety as the highest priority.

Another policy I want to lift up here is the supervision of children. Especially in light of what we learned during the drill, it is imperative that our children are adequately supervised at all times while on campus. During Worship Services, all children should be either in the Sanctuary with a parent or caregiver, in the Nursery with our childcare providers (if under the age of 5), or in their program session (when one is being offered). Recently there have been children spending time in various locations throughout the building without the presence of a responsible adult, and this situation carries risks to their safety that are easily avoidable.

Officially, UUCG policy is that all children at UUCG should either be in the company of their parents/caregivers or at least two designated adults at all times. This policy applies whether they are in the building or on the playground.

I appreciate your assistance in reminding your children of this, and helping them adhere to this policy.

Please reach out to me at ANY time if you have questions, concerns, or want to discuss the ways we prioritize the safety of our youngest UUs.

In covenant,
Christiana

Faith
Development
resources
for exploring
The Practice of
Joy

Check out The Practice of
Joy- Soul Matters April
Play list on [YouTube](#) or
[Spotify](#).



Words
of Wisdom?

We invite you
to journey with us...



Ministry of Spiritual Growth

The Smell of Spring make your own floral incense sticks

Gather herbs and flowers from your yard or garden. Confirm that the flowers are not toxic when burned. Ask permission from the plant and then thank the plant for its abundance given. You will need cotton string and scissors too. Cut your string about a yard long. Lay the string down on a table and then your herbs and flowers. Layer the herbs and flowers as you would like. Don't put too much in the bundle. Once you are satisfied with the arrangement bring the string together and tie a knot. Then wrap the string around the herbs and flowers up and down, not too tight and not too loose. Bring the ends back to the center and tie another knot. Hang up in a cool dry space.



Share your incense sticks with us on
**Facebook or
Instagram**

Beltane Explained

by Candice Carver

The season of Beltane is a time of joy, passion, and sacred union—a festival marking the peak of spring and the turning toward summer's warmth. Celebrated on May 1st (or the closest full moon), Beltane is a fire festival honoring fertility, abundance, and the blossoming of life. The land is alive with energy, the air filled with the scent of new blooms, and the promise of fruitfulness lingers in every budding tree and flowering field.

The Oak Grove Sylvan Sanctuary Druids honor this sacred season by hosting a Beltane Ritual on the first Saturday of May, all of our community is invited to celebrate the High Holy Day. Through ritual, chant, and sound, we weave our intentions into the fabric of the season, embracing the joy of growth, love, and connection. Beltane is practiced in many forms around the world. In Ireland and Scotland, it has deep Celtic roots, where fires were lit on hilltops, and cattle were driven between the flames for purification and blessing. In modern pagan traditions, Beltane often includes handfasting ceremonies, symbolizing commitments made in the spirit of love and partnership.

Beyond Beltane, May is a month rich with cultural celebrations. In Germany, Walpurgisnacht on April 30th welcomes spring with bonfires and revelry, much like ancient Beltane fires. Across Europe, May Day is observed with flower festivals and dances, keeping alive the themes of renewal and vitality. In Japan, Golden Week brings a time of travel and leisure, celebrating nature and family. No matter how it is observed, Beltane is a reminder to embrace joy, honor the divine in all things, and step fully into the vibrant dance of life.



Photo by Sherree Bailey 2021



Ministry of Connecting Within



Joy Doubled

by Lisa Kiel, Lay Minister for Connecting Within

“Shared joy is double joy.

Shared sorrow is half sorrow.”

~ Swedish Proverb

Congratulations! We made it to Spring! I don't know about you, but this past Winter felt like the longest Winter on record. Winter isn't always my favorite time of the year, but I do enjoy the coziness of home, hot cocoa and the holidays that bring my grown children home, and yet, this past Winter tested my patience. I am ready for longer days, the warmth of the sun, and the welcoming colors of flowering trees, bushes and plants. Most of all I'm ready to feel that sense of joy that only an exuberant Spring can inspire.

Now that the weather is getting warmer, I've been checking my gardens, pots and plants to see who survived, who didn't and who needs help. My perennials are like my friends, and I'm happy to see them after our months of hibernation. I feel a bit of joy when I see the hostas poking their green shoots above the soil, and the spikes of irises standing tall

in our garden.

Everything did not survive the snow and low temperatures, and that makes what did

survive all that more precious. Naturally, all the weeds pulled through just fine!

There are seasons in our lives where it feels hard to open ourselves up to joy. The stresses and worries created by the society surrounding us feel inescapable right now, and if we're not careful we'll continue to hide away. We'll miss the opportunities for joy that exist right outside our front door. This April, come and connect with friends and loved ones here at UUCG.

Find a group, an activity or an event to be part of and double your joy by sharing it with others.

With joy,

Lisa



Book Group

Wed. April 23rd at 7:00pm

Online via Zoom

The UUCG Book Group meets on the 4th Wednesday of every month online via Zoom.

Find information about the current month's selected title here as soon as it becomes available.

All are welcome to join the discussion.



Ministry of Connecting Within



Friends, Family, Fun!

Friday, April 4th
at 6:30pm
in the Sanctuary
at UUCG

Belief Explorers

Sunday, April 13th
at 12:30pm
in the Library and
online via Zoom



ONGOING OPPORTUNITIES



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



Book Club - Online : 4th Wednesday at 7-9 pm
<https://zoom.us/j/144736833>



Covenant Groups - 2nd Monday online 7-9 pm *Registration ongoing*



Men's Group - In Person 2nd Saturdays at 9 am



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



QUUest - Adults: In Person: 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



Walkers - 2nd and 4th Thursdays at 11 am, for location information,

email admin@uucg.org



Women's Group - 4th Sundays at 12:30pm



Yarns from the Heart - Online 1st and 3rd Wednesday, for
Zoom link: email admin@uucg.org



Connecting within starts with presence—pausing to breathe, reflect, and truly see the beauty around us. As you walk through the doors of UUCG, capture the moments that bring you joy and share in the collective appreciation of this sacred space.

CHECK OUT THE CONNECTING WITHIN BULLETIN BOARD

Ministry of Connecting Beyond



The Radical Act of Joy

by Candice Carver (she/her), Lay Minister for Connecting Beyond

"The sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic, or intellectual, forms a bridge between the sharers which can be the basis for understanding much of what is not shared between them, and lessens the threat of their difference."

~ Audre Lorde

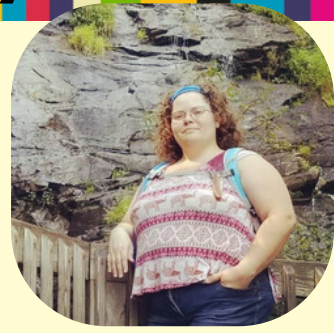
Activism, Resistance, Social Justice. These words stir something deep in me—an urgency, a calling, a sense of responsibility. But alongside that pull, there is emotional resistance, a fear that clenches my chest before I can take the next step. It is an old fear, one I can trace back to my father's voice, his warnings, his disapproval. The message was clear: speaking out leads to me getting into trouble.

I grew up experiencing his idea that protesting was a form of disrespect. He believed that stirring the waters only invites trouble. I see now we were similar, as he was also taught not to resist or stand up to his father for what he believed in, and when he did, there was hell to pay. To him, safety was found in quiet compliance, in keeping his head down and hands clean. This was of course after his many years in rehab. But through this trauma I learned to be cautious. I learned to hesitate. Even now, when I feel the urge to stand up, to raise my voice, I hear the echoes of his caution—*Is this worth the risk? Think of what the consequences will be, what you could lose. Will this cause family drama?*

But what if activism isn't only about resistance? What if it isn't just about fighting against, but also about creating something new?



Photo by Barbara Stahnke, 2023



I've been taught that activism is loud, that it is protest and risk, that it is struggle. But I am coming to understand that joy is its own form of resistance. To live with joy, to build a life rooted in love, to celebrate and uplift—that is resistance, too. In a world that so often thrives on fear, division, and scarcity, choosing joy is a radical act.

I see now that joy is not just personal; it is communal. It is a way of building bridges, of fostering connection where division once stood. It is a way of softening the edges of fear and planting something fertile in its place.

I do not have to carry my father's fear forever. I do not have to step into activism in the way I was taught to fear it. I can step forward in my own way—not into trouble, but into Good Trouble and purpose. I can honor my truth, embrace joy, and let that be my offering to the world. Because joy is not a retreat from activism—it is the heartbeat of it.

How do you see joy as an act of resistance in your own life? In what ways can we use joy to create change?



Photo by Candice Carver 2015

Ministry of Connecting Beyond

The Future of Energy Equity in Georgia

Get Informed and Raise Your Voice!

At the March 23 monthly gathering of Good Trouble and the Climate Justice Revival, it was proposed that the most important local action for UUCG (and in fact all Georgia UU congregations) to take is to **raise our voices** in light of the recent “surprise” proposal by Georgia Power: the 2025 Integrated Resource Plan. This proposal is in response to the expected step-function increase in energy demand because of the predicted explosion of data centers and AI facilities in Georgia.

So, what is the problem? The environmental and social justice devils are in the details of the plan – higher costs, greater energy burdens on low-income households, and more pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. A period of public comment to the Georgia Public Services Commission is just beginning and some of those commissioners will be up for election later this year. The time is now to get informed and raise our voices. We will be working to facilitate individual and collective input into the process in the coming weeks and months. Please join us for our next monthly **Good Trouble** meeting on **April 27** when our guest speaker will be Jane Nelson, who has decades of experience in energy policy implementation. In the meantime, we will be providing more information on this critical issue.

Let's Celebrate 35 Years of Green Sanctuary

We can imagine collapse - can we imagine renewal?

Green Sanctuary 35th Anniversary and Call for Renewal

Wednesday, April 16
4 PT / 5 MT / 6 CT / 7 ET



Rev. Dr. Sofia Betancourt

For more than three decades, Unitarian Universalist congregations have been imagining renewal through their engagement with the Green Sanctuary Program. [...] This event will celebrate and honor the work of the many organizations, individuals, and congregations that have shaped our denomination's response to climate. It will also include a healthy dose of hope, optimism, and faith, which we can all use now.

Learn more and Register [here](#)!

Food Distribution



Gwinnett

**Starting at 3:00PM
while supplies last.**

- Fresh & Shelf-stable foods
- No ID required
- Drive through distribution

April 8th

RHODES JORDAN PARK
100 E Crogan St., Lawrenceville

April 22nd

BEST FRIEND PARK
6224 Jimmy Cartger Blvd., Norcross

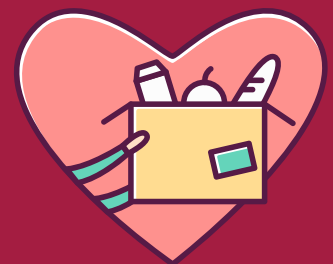
May 13

LENORA PARK
4515 Lenora Church Road, Snellville

May 20

BRYSON PARK
5075 Lawrenceville HWY, Lilburn

For more information, visit
[GwinnettCounty.com/FoodResources](https://www.gwinnettcountry.com/foodresources)



Ministry of Connecting Beyond

Opportunities to Connect with Our Wider Community

Blooms Away

Seed Bombs for a Wild Garden

Wednesday, April 9th

2:00pm - 3:00pm

Gwinnett County Public Library

Five Forks Branch

Have a passion for wildflowers? Discover everything there is to know about Georgia's native blooms and find out how you can help them flourish by creating your very own seed bomb!

Call to ACTION!

Rise up With UU
Congregations in Georgia!

Atlanta PRIDE 2025

Looking for volunteers to help
with planning, executing,
marching and working the
Atlanta Pride event.

October 11th & 12th

10AM - 6PM

Email: connectingbeyond@uucg.org
for more info



COLLECTING ON APRIL 6th at UUCG

Most Needed Food Items

- Macaroni and cheese
- Instant potatoes
- *Village of Hope needs mac and cheese cups, ramen cups, boxed milk, and rice cups

Most Needed Non-Food Items

- Size 3 and up diapers
- Feminine pads
- Adult diapers Size S-XL
- Laundry pods



Gwinnett Interfaith Alliance Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, April 8th

Location: Temple Beth David
1885 McGee Road, Snellville

Meeting 7:30PM-8:00PM

Presentation 8:00PM-9:00PM

Speaker: Brittany Stancoff

Topic: "Transgender Rights in Georgia"

gwinnettinterfaithalliance@gmail.com

Rain Barrel Workshop

April 15th 5pm-8pm

\$40 Fee for supplies

Temple Beth David

Contact Martha
Whitman via [email](mailto:1marthawhitma@gmail.com)

1marthawhitma@gmail.com

Congregational Study/Action Issue Feedback Sessions

Join the UUA's Commission on Social Witness to learn more about each CSAI, offer feedback, & connect with others interested in the issue!

April 10 at 8pm

Housing: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

April 17 at 8pm

**Fat Liberation: Building Justice and
Inclusion for Larger Bodies**

April 22 at 8pm

Abolition is Faith Formation

Learn more and register at uua.org/socialwitness

Save the Date

Sylvan Sanctuary
Beltane Ritual
Saturday, May 3rd
Gathering at 5:45PM
Ritual starts at 6:00PM



"Town Hall" Meeting
Sunday, May 4th at 12:30pm

Congregational Business Meeting
Sunday, May 18th at 12:30pm

NEW MEMBER SIGNING
& CELEBRATION
Sunday, May 18th

For information about becoming a member
reach out to radicalwelcome@uucg.org



From June 18–22, 2025, the 64th UUA General Assembly participants will gather to worship, witness, learn, connect, and make policy decisions for the Association through a democratic process. GA will be a multi-platform event, with the main stage hosted at the Baltimore Convention Center in Baltimore, Maryland and hundreds more joining online.









































[Click here to learn more about participating and engaging with the business of our UUA.](#)



UUA GENERAL ASSEMBLY
BALTIMORE • JUNE 18 - 22, 2025

April 2025



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2 	3 	4 	5  
6     	7 	8 	9 	10  	11 	12  
13   	14 	15 	16 	17 	18	19 
20   	21	22 	23 	24 	25 	26
27   	28	29 	30	1 	2	3  

	Food Bank Donations Days	Food collection for our members in need and the Lawrenceville Co-op	In-Person
	Potluck Lunch	Sign up to volunteer; bring a dish to share; come break bread together	In-Person
	Board Of Trustees	Congregational Conversation, Board Meeting, or Business Meeting. All members and friends of UUCG are invited to attend	In-Person and Online via Zoom
	Alphabet SoUUp	Discussion group for Queer-identified folx	In-Person
	Choir	Rehearsal for performance during Worship Services	In-Person
	Yarns from the Heart	Creates prayer shawls and baby blankets for members and friends	Online via Zoom
	Music Night	Musicians of all skill levels gather to play together	In-Person
	Property Beautification	Monthly indoor/outdoor workday. All skills and abilities are welcome	In-Person
	Oak Grove UUCG CUUPs	Oak Grove UUCG Covenant of UU Pagans Gathering, all are welcome	In-Person
	Belief Explorers	Explorers of world philosophies, faith traditions & religions	In-Person and Online via Zoom
	Spiral Scouts	All-gender scouting group for ages 3-12	In-Person
	Covenant Groups	Small Group Ministry. Registration Required	In-Person and Online via Zoom
	Men's Group (inclusive)	Male-identified people gather for discussion	In-Person
	Tarot Classes	A learning space for all who are interested in the tarot	In-Person
	Green Team Meeting	Environmental Justice-focused group, all are welcome	Online via Zoom
	Sylvan Sanctuary	Oak Grove Sylvan Sanctuary Druid Ritual celebrating the Sabbats	In-Person
	Book Group	Monthly book discussion (contact administrator for link to join)	Online via Zoom
	G3T	Grand Green Get Togethers: Movies and more with the Green Team	In-Person
	Worship Services	Sunday Morning Worship Services at 11:00am weekly	In-Person and Online via Zoom
	Family Game Night	Board and card games in community - all ages welcome	In-Person
	QUEST & QUEST Jr.	D&D campaigns, registration required	In-Person
	Good Trouble	Sunday After Service at 12:30PM	In-Person
	Women's Group	All who identify as women are welcome to this safe space for sharing & connection	In-Person

Staff Schedules

Rev. Nancy Palmer Jones *Minister*

revnpj@uucg.org | 678-558-4834
Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays:
10:00 am. - 4:00 pm
First & Third Saturdays: 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

LaTreisha McKay *Bookkeeper*

lmckay@uucg.org
Monday (remote), 5:00 pm-8:00 pm

Christiana McQuain *Coordinator of Family Ministries*

cmcquain@uucg.org
Tuesdays (remote), 9:00 am-4:00 pm
Fridays (on-site), 9:00 am-2:00 pm
most Sundays (on-site) 8:30 am-2:30 pm

Michael Parker *Choir Director*

choirdirector@uucg.org
Tuesdays (on-site), 1:00 pm-6:00 pm

Jason Pfeffer *Office Administrator*

admin@uucg.org
Tuesdays & Fridays, 9am-1pm
Third Sundays, 10:30-12:30pm

Becca Parker *Choir Director*

choirdirector@uucg.org
Sunday mornings (On-site),
9:00am-12:00 pm