



August 2025

Gwinnett News for Unitarian Universalists

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Gnus live in communities that vary from small, family-based herds to large migratory groups. Female wildebeest and their young form herds, while males may form bachelor groups before becoming territorial bulls. The most well-known wildebeest community is the Serengeti-Mara population, which undertakes a massive annual migration.

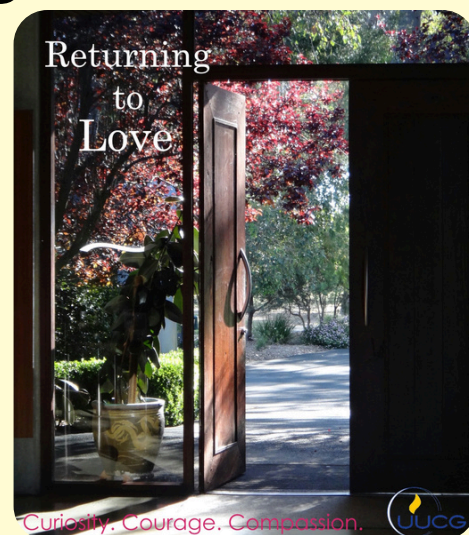
Returning to Love

Sometimes, keeping Love at the center can pose a challenge. You may find this to be true in this very moment - these are the times we are living in. Reminding ourselves that we can - indeed we must - return to Love with intention is what will carry us forward.

Ten years ago when the Supreme Court ruled on the side of love with their affirmation of the right for same-sex couples to marry, there was a slogan dominating public discourse: Love Wins. And that was a sentiment that we could happily rejoice in, across many contexts.

Fast forward to today. The political climate in our nation has shifted, and the truth and joy of that statement may not feel quite so prevalent. In these moments of unsurety whether love will indeed win in the end, it is imperative that we return to our own practice of centering love. When we return again to Love over and over, when we speak and move and act in Love, Love Wins.

We invite you to join us this month as we Return to Love together.



Worship in August

Sundays at 11:00am

Theme: Returning to Love

Join us in-person or via Zoom

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



August 3rd

What Kind of Love Do We Carry?

Blessing of the Backpacks!

We begin this new program year by "Returning to Love," August's theme. Love sits at the very center of our faith; it is the fuel, compass, sustenance, and support for our lives, both communally and personally. But Love is a wide-encompassing word. What kind of Love in particular do we learn, embody, and carry out into the world from UUCG? This Sunday we name and claim the love that we share, and we fill all our backpacks, bags, and satchels with this love as we launch the new school year and the new congregational year at UUCG!

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

August 10th

Going to the Source

What do we love about our faith? When looking for the truth in love whether historically, communally, or personally it is important to go have a trusted source. This morning we will look at some of the sources we as Beloved Community love about our faith. Some might be surprising and everyone doesn't need every THING that comes their way. But together we can use them to strengthen our circle of beloved community.

Lydia Patrick (she/her), Service Leader

August 17th

Where Our Deep Gladness and the World's Deep Hunger Meet

Theologian Frederick Buechner says that when we're looking for what we are called to do and be as people of faith, we want to look for "where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." Can you name two or three sources of your deep gladness—the joy or meaning that abides even in hard times? Let's strengthen our open circle by tapping into these sources—and getting to know each other better.

August 24th

The Circle of Love - Draw it Wide

How do we as Unitarians allow love to be at the center of everything we do? What exactly is love that is inclusive and defiant? Let's look into ourselves and see where Interdependence, Justice, Equity, Generosity, Pluralism, and Transformation intersect in our lives. Come hear a range of voices reflect on the meaning and application of this year's Vision of Ministry!

Lydia Patrick (she/her), Service Leader

August 31st

Loving Each Other Up

The Rev. Dawn Skjei (SHAY) Cooley writes: "Loving the hell out of the world means loving each other out of hell." We consider this a challenge not to turn away in fear and disgust from the malevolent darkness of mind and spirit that is spreading across our Country and destroying our Mother Earth. We consider that listening, learning, and helping each other to overcome fear, bitterness, and hatred embodies the spiritual definition of love. This love practiced inside of our Beloved Community can prepare us to live out the promises we make to each other in the larger world.

Bill Benshoof (he/him), Service Leader

Programs

Sundays at 12:30pm

1st Sunday, 8/3

- Potluck Lunch
- Resisting Fascism

2nd Sunday, 8/10

- Belief Explorers

3rd Sunday, 8/17

- Resisting Fascism

4th Sunday, 8/24

- "Good Trouble"





Worship and More



Sharing Our Gifts Through Give Away the Plate

Give Away the Plate is a program at UUCG that shares quarterly plate offerings with an external organization chosen by the congregation.



During the third quarter of 2025 (through September 30), we will share the Sunday morning offering with Mosaic of Georgia, whose mission is to provide unwavering support to victims of sexualized violence. Learn more on the [Mosaic Georgia website](https://www.mosaicga.org/).



Lughnasadh

**Join the Sylvan Sanctuary Druids
Saturday, August 2nd at 6:00PM**

Please bring a donation for the
Lawrenceville Co-op.

BLESSING OF THE BACKPACKS

Sunday, August 3rd at 11:00am

We invite all everyone to bring your backpacks, bags, satchels or electronic devices to be filled with blessings of love for the start of the new school year.



Fall & Winter Events at UUCG

Ingathering & Water Ceremony
Volunteer Fair
Green Team Movie Night
Autumn Equinox Ritual
Covenant Groups
Sharing the Journey
Wi\$dom Path
Blessing of the Animals

Atlanta PRIDE
Ritual of Remembrance
Samhain Ritual
Trunk or Treat
Thanksgiving
Blue Christmas Service
Winter Solstice Ritual
Christmas Eve Service

Message From the Minister



Returning to OUR Love

by Rev. Nancy Palmer Jones (she/her)



On Friday evening, July 18, UUCG's board members, lay ministers, Christiana Fernandez-McQuain, and I gathered in a circle in the sanctuary (in person and online) to begin the Annual Leader Retreat for 2025-2026. These Leader Retreats have three primary goals:



1. To develop deeper relationships among the leaders and staff so that mutual love and understanding will guide our work together
2. To name an Annual Vision of Ministry—an overarching theme around which UUCG will focus our learning, being, and doing in the coming program year
3. To discern the Shared Congregational Goals, the main areas in which we want to grow

This year the retreat began with each of us choosing, from random images, the one that most resonated with us. We shared what the image was and why it resonated—and then we go deeper: What does this resonance say about

our spirits, our essence, our connections to what is deepest in us and to what is larger than us?

The stories are tender and intimate, sorrowful, searching, and funny. There's such generosity in the sharing, and so much diversity. The process reminds us of our "why"—why we are here together, as part of UUCG, and why we each may be here on this planet, too. Pause for a moment, dear ones: What is your "why"?

Then Christiana and I introduced these questions:

- What is the **core teaching** of this congregation?
- What is the **central ministry** of this congregation?
- In other words, what is the **unique identity** of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Gwinnett—our unique expression of this Unitarian Universalist faith? What is our purpose? *Why* does UUCG exist?

We leaders won't try to answer these questions on our own; they belong to the whole congregation. For the retreat, we can let these questions seed our work toward defining the Annual Vision of Ministry and the Shared Goals. We also drew on the responses to this year's Congregational Survey (see the summary in this issue), and we added in our own experiences, wisdom, intuition, and love for UUCG. We stirred all of this together, and with much thought and discussion, some straying from the topic at hand, a few breaks for food, and a lot of laughter, we came up with these guides for UUCG for the year that begins this month:

(continued on next page)

Message From the Minister

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Annual Vision of Ministry 2025-2026: Our love is inclusive and defiant.

“Our love is inclusive and defiant!” These are our leaders’ words, and I am awed by them. What a remarkable definition of the specific kind of love that is ours, UUCG’s, to share with the world in these times! How much curiosity, courage, and compassion it will take for us to live into this vision! Come with us! We’ll dive right in with the worship service on August 3 and continue throughout the year.

The Leader Retreat concluded on Sunday afternoon, July 20, with another personal question: How do each of us want to grow spiritually this year? When we look back at the end of the year, how do we hope we will have grown and changed? How would you answer these questions, dear ones?

And now, the new program year begins! Grounded in our spirituality, in a sense of our “why” collectively and individually, may we bring our full selves into this community guided by a deep and determined Love.

I am thrilled to be on this journey with you!

With Our Love at the center,
Rev. Nancy

Shared Congregational Goals:

- Responding to These Times, such as through community self-care, opportunities for direct community service and action, and worship content and style
- Extending Our Outreach, such as through increased visibility, community partnerships, and showing up for community events
- Exploring Diverse Paths to Spiritual Growth, such as through exploring a wide range of sources and bringing new voices into worship

UUCG 2025-2026

Annual Vision of Ministry

“Love is patient, Love is kind...”
Yes, and deep, meaningful love is also so much more. Love that has the power to change the world draws its circle wide *and* holds its boundaries.

This year, we at UUCG endeavor to live into this bold vision, this paradox that invites and challenges us to love the world in ways both soft and loud.

How can we grow, lead, and live into this bold, visionary way of being?

Our love
is inclusive
and defiant.



Returning to Love

Results of the 2024-2025 UUCG Annual Survey

by Rev. Nancy Palmer Jones (she/her)

The leaders and staff of UUCG extend our heartiest thanks to everyone who took part in our new Annual Program-Year Survey, “Measuring a Year in the Life of UUCG: 2024-2025”!

Who Participated?

- 25 percent of the congregation, a great start!
- From newcomers to long-timers and in between, from younger to older folx, from those who focus on just a few areas of congregational life to those who dive into many
- Each of you offered your unique and thoughtful review of the past program year, sharing what went well for you and expressing your longing for ways in which our community can grow.

What’s Going Well?

Ministry for Spiritual Growth:

- Sunday morning worship – openness; variety of themes and styles; increased interaction; more youth engagement, especially the youth-led service; Faith Formation time for the children twice a month; the choir, Sweet MUUsic, and new music in general; the tech crew, the lay leaders, the minister; homilies that don’t shy away from difficult topics; greater attendance; Centering Tables layout ... Worship is “beautiful and healing”; “I leave church feeling more connected and grounded for the work of the week ahead.”
- Other mentions: CUUPs/Sylvan Sanctuary; Good Trouble; Belief Explorers; Words of Wisdom

Staff:

- Welcoming, available, responsive, present, and knowledgeable
- Newsletters and weekly e-News
- “Love you all!”

Board:

- Time and energy given to the cell tower deal; to safety and security
- Their energy and transparency
- “I admire all your dedication, and appreciate your hard work!”

Overall Engagement Across the Congregation:

- More people initiating programs, groups, events
- More volunteers; strength of Shared Ministry Council structure

Ministry for Connecting Within:

- Lots of appreciation for affinity groups (men’s and women’s groups, Alphabet SoUUp, etc.) and covenant groups
- QUUest; and “times to talk without judgment in challenging times”

Ministry for Radical Welcome:

- Class on Trans Inclusion in Congregations
- Sunday camaraderie and monthly potlucks
- Sharing the Journey new-member class
- UUCG people are “friendly and welcoming”

Ministry for Connecting Beyond:

- Trunk or Treat
- LUUV Fest
- The visible work of the Communications Team to publicize UUCG events
- Participation in the local food bank and in county food distribution
- Peace Festival; Little Free Library

Ministry for Green Space:

- Climate Justice Revival
- The beautiful upkeep of the grounds
- Movie nights, including other groups
- Renewal of the labyrinth

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Returning to Love

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In What Areas Do We Long to Grow?

- More social events, including family friendly ones
- More support for families, from adoption/foster care to Family Night Out
- More listening circles to address grief, trauma, fear, and current events
- More outreach to the wider community, including invitations to participate in UUCG classes
- More classes on practical skills and knowledge sharing, plus OWL
- More variety of times for classes
- More Trans Inclusion and other opportunities to grow in this area
- More updated songs in worship
- More meditation and mindfulness practice, in worship and beyond
- More variety of speakers on Sunday mornings, including guests from other religions and organizations
- More visibility for Board members, and more Board updates on financial and building news
- More accessibility to and use of our outdoor spaces
- More visibility for Green Team
- And many more specific requests, all of which the leaders and staff have absorbed

This Annual Program-Year Survey provided such valuable input that we invite you to participate again in June 2026! Let's shoot for at least 30 percent participation next year! Meanwhile, please notice as we go this year: what works well for you and what do you long for in our ministries? Please don't hesitate to share your gratitudes and longings with the leaders and staff throughout the year!

Seeking More Pastoral Care Associates!

UUCG's Pastoral Care Associates play a crucial role in creating and sustaining our congregation's Culture of Care. They are partners with me, as your minister, in companioning our folk in times of need. Pastoral Care Associates (PCAs) can testify to the satisfaction they get from offering their love in this way.

It's time now to expand the team!

I envision a team of 6 to 10 Pastoral Care Associates, each of whom takes on one or more of the following roles. Pastoral Care Associates rotate their duties. With a robust team, a PCA would likely serve in one of these roles just one week out of each month or more.

Training in all these roles will be offered in the fall and open to all who are interested in growing our capacity for compassionate companionship. Members of Covenant Groups are especially encouraged to attend.

All titles here are tentative; this vision is still emerging!

- **Listener:** Responds to calls on UUCG's Pastoral Care line during the week that the PA is on call
- **Connector:** Makes phone calls or sends Cards from the Heart to congregants on our care radar to see how they are doing
- **Visitor:** Visits congregants in hospitals, homes, or coffee shops to offer occasional in-person companionship
- **Sunday Pastoral Carer:** Holds a space on Sundays after worship where people can light a candle, fill out a prayer/care request, speak with a compassionate listener

What You Can Do Now:

If you are interested in learning more about becoming a Pastoral Care Associate, please send a note to Rev. Nancy at revnpj@uucg.org with "Pastoral Care Associate" in the subject line.

From the Board



The New Roof is Coming!

by Dan Kelly, President, UUCG Board of Trustees

We have been given a tentative START DATE for Construction of August 19th. The project is anticipated to take five working days. It is important to keep in mind that, like any construction project, the exact dates can shift because of weather or other delays.

Therefore, we are assuming the building will be unavailable from August 18-August 30.

We intend to have Worship Service in the Sanctuary on August 17 and August 31. We will need lots of help to prepare the Sanctuary after August 17 Service and reset it before August 31 Service!

Discussions are in the works with Worship Leaders to develop an alternative location or plan for the August 24 Service.

Should the Start Date for Construction change by a week or more, we will adjust the "window" accordingly and communicate information as we receive it.

MEANWHILE:

We will need to continue preparing the building each weekend. We made a great start, but there's lots more to do! We are hoping that someone in Leadership can step forward for each Saturday to be the coordinator. Please let me and Christiana know if you are able to serve as a coordinator on any Saturday.

Thank you!
Dan Kelly



Ministry of Radical Welcome

The Power of Inspiring Hope



by Carol Underwood, Lay Minister for Radical Welcome



Being in the times we are in can be very scary and lead to feelings of hopelessness. What has helped me is being active in our community. There are so many opportunities at UUCG to help out. Engaging in community is an act of resistance.

I attended the leadership retreat in July, and I am deeply inspired by the Vision of Ministry we decided upon together. "Our love is inclusive and defiant." What this means for Radical Welcome is that I am inspired to connect all interested participants to programs in our community.

At UUCG we are a diverse community with many different goals and needs. There are so many opportunities for deep engagement with our Green Team, Worship Team, Covenant Groups, Trans Inclusion Workshop, Hospitality, Pastoral Care, and so many, many more. Let us encourage each other to connect within this community and our interconnected web of life. Let us inspire hope in one another.

I believe that many of us are social beings and need community. For some, there is introversion. At UUCG there are places for us all. Let me know if there is any way I can help you get connected. Email RadicalWelcome@uucg.org. We don't have to suffer alone. Let us come together and serve from a place of love. Let us grow together into a committed community, fighting against any feelings of hopelessness the circumstances in the world may inspire.

If you are interested in growing into membership, we will begin the Sharing the Journey workshop again in September. This is a great way to see what UUCG has to offer as a community. Little things grow into big things with enough time and experience.

Thank you!
Carol Underwood



Love is the will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth.

M. Scott Peck

Ministry of Radical Welcome

We Love Our Volunteers! Thank You for Sharing Your Time & Talent!

Are you seeking your niche? Looking for a way to serve, but not quite sure what will suit your particular interests and talents? Look through this newsletter, or reach out to SharedMinistry@uucg.org to get connected.

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!

Help Show Your Love: Join the Hospitality Team!

We are especially in need of folks to assist with clean-up following Coffee Hour

- 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!

Which of your gifts can you share with the UUCG community as we Tend the Commons 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**



Ministry of Green Space



A Challenging Chore

By Xoey Kelly

As part of UUCG's mission to be a sanctuary in a green space we have committed to several sustainable practices, one of which is to reduce our waste. Rather than filling our trash with disposables, we use ceramic mugs, glass plates and silverware, when possible. We separate our paper, plastic, and aluminum from non-recyclables to be properly disposed of and hopefully remade into new products. We also collect compostable food items in a container so that they don't rot away in a landfill.

Everyone who uses the church facilities has a hand in this process. After service, those that use a mug are reminded to take care of cleaning and putting it away, just as volunteers are tasked with washing the many used dishes and utensils following potluck. Trash and recycling bins are routinely taken out of the building by the Facilities Caretaker to be picked up by city waste management crews. So, what about the food scraps? Who is in charge of those? Well, the answer to that is no one and everyone. Our compost bin is in great need of equal attendance from congregants so that we can keep the kitchen sanitary and the soil fed.

As a weekly errand, before the container becomes overfull and attracts pests, the compost bucket should be emptied and cleaned by any willing and able person. To do this one must:

1. Lift the lidded bucket out of the wooden cabinet and take it out the front doors, up the grassy hill, and over to the raised garden beds.



2. Remove the lid and dump the contents of the bucket into the black compost tumbler, after which a few good turns should be given. If the tumbler is already too full of material then the bucket can be emptied into the center well space of the Keyhole Garden.



3. Bring the bucket and lid to the portico where the water hose is coiled to rinse them off completely. The spigot must be turned on and off from the inside, found in a small recess in the wall to the left of the doors, as well as the outside.



4. Return to the kitchen where an additional wipe down with soap will need to be done to remove any lingering smell before the bucket can be put back in its place, ready to receive another round of organic waste.



If more people were to take it upon themselves to pitch in with this simple chore, then we, as a congregation, can continue to fulfill our vision of a greener way of living into our values. Are you up to the challenge?

Ministry of Green Space

Upcoming Green Team Events:

- **Aug. 2** - Property Beautification Day, 10:00am
- **Aug. 16** - Green Team Meeting via Zoom, 9:30am
- **Sept. 19** - Movie Night:
We'll have a showing of "2040", an uplifting movie of the future.



Green Sanctuary 2030

The Green Sanctuary program has been revised. The requirements are simplified. Also, the requirements show annual growth instead of a one time effort. Our team is researching the new requirements. You can find more information at the [UUA Website](https://www.uua.org/green-sanctuary).

Next Property Beautification Day: August 2

Help is also needed for indoor beautification, such as:

- Emptying and cleaning the refrigerators
- Making sure dishes are cleaned and put away
- Organizing the ready room
- Packing items in preparation for the roof repair

Ministry of Spiritual Growth

Faith Development: Tending the Flame

by Christiana Fernandez-McQuain, Coordinator of Family Ministries



Can you believe August is already here? The speed at which the calendar pages are turning is almost unfathomable. A new program year is upon us at UUCG, and I am so looking forward to the opportunity to welcome it in with new offerings and a new schedule. **R.E. for children and Youth will begin on September 7th**, giving families a chance to settle into the new school year before diving into Faith Development. That schedule will be announced mid-August in a separate Faith Development Newsletter. Parents, **please take a moment to register** so you can receive all communication.

I am still hoping to reconvene a Faith Development Team to support the continued offering of programs for children, Youth, and adults that inspire exploration of and engagement with our UU faith & values in thoughtful, intentional ways that feed your spirit.

If you are interested in serving on the Faith Development Team and working in collaboration to plan & develop our program offerings through the coming year (or have any questions), please reach out to me at cmcquain@uucg.org.

Looking forward to the journey ahead, as we Return to Love.

With gratitude & grace,
Christiana

Returning to Love

Faith
Development
resources
for exploring
Returning to
Love

Check out The Places We
Belong - Soul Matters July
Playlist on [Spotify](#).



Words of Wisdom?

We invite you
to journey with us...

Summer Program: Resisting Fascism



Centered on the content of the book *On Tyranny*, by Timothy Snyder, and facilitated by Steve Babb, this program is designed to open discussion about the peril our democracy is currently facing, and where we have agency to make a difference.

**Final Sessions: 12:30pm
on August 3 & August 17**

If you need a copy of the book, UUCG has copies to lend. Reach out to Steve Babb or Christiana.

Ministry of Spiritual Growth

Meeting the Moment Film Screening: Journalists Under Fire

UUCG will host a screening of the documentary film “Gaza: Journalists Under Fire,” directed by Robert Greenwald and produced by Brave New Films, with follow-up discussion

**Sunday, August 31st, 12:30pm-2:00pm at UUCG
Facilitated by Steve Babb & Barbara Stahnke**

As of April 2025, 178 journalists and media workers have been killed in Gaza since October 7th, 2023 – more than the total number of journalists killed in the U.S. Civil War, World War One, World War Two, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the War in Afghanistan combined.

Another 93 journalists have been wounded over that period, with an additional 84 journalists being arrested or detained, and 70 press facilities in Gaza being destroyed.

Most of these reporters have been killed while clearly displaying passes identifying them as members of the press. Many of them have been killed in their homes together with their families in targeted airstrikes. Israel bars foreign reporters, fact-finding missions, and human rights groups from entering Gaza, with the exception of a few tightly controlled and curated tours for selected reporters embedded with Israeli military forces. This makes Palestinian reporters living and working in Gaza the only independent source of information on what is happening in Gaza other than the Israeli military and government.

This documentary focuses specifically on the story of three of the most prominent Gaza journalists who have been killed since October 7th, including:

Bilal Jadallah, the Director of Press House-Palestine, who was killed on November 19th, 2023 at the age of 45, making him the 49th journalist killed in this conflict;

Heba Al-Abdallah, a radio host, journalist, and co-founder of Social Media Club-Palestine who was killed together with her daughter, her mother, and several other family members on January 9th, 2024 at the age of 30, making her the 84th journalist killed in this conflict; and
Ismail al-Ghoul, Al Jazeera journalist and reporter, who was killed on July 31st, 2024 at the age of 27, making him the 126th journalist killed in this conflict.

We will watch this 40-minute documentary together and then have a brief discussion about it. *Please note that this documentary contains some graphic and disturbing images that are not suitable for young children.*



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!



[Click HERE](#)

Ministry of Connecting Within



Thoughts About Love

by Lisa Kiel, Lay Minister for Connecting Within

“Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage.”

~ Lao Tzu

We as Unitarian Universalists are called not to just live our values of Generosity, Pluralism, Transformation, Interdependence, Justice, and Equity in the broader world, but to do so by using Love, not as a cliché, but as a discipline. If you have read any of this newsletter you are aware of the 2025-2026 Annual Vision of Ministry:

Our Love is Inclusive & Defiant. Did that last word give you pause? Did you unconsciously take a deep breath while reading the phrase to its end? Are you wondering what were the Board, Shared Ministry Council, and Staff thinking while attending the recent Leadership Retreat? Or, while taking that pause, did you decide to embrace the transformative power of a defiant Love that needs to be louder than hate in our world, right now? I hope it's the latter. As we explore the theme of Returning to Love this month, how has the love of this community and loving this community in return given you strength and courage?

Covenant Groups are returning this September. We are still in the planning phase, but I would

like to take a few moments to encourage everyone to consider joining a small group ministry like Covenant Groups. Because Covenant Groups follow the themes of our monthly worship, participating is both a pathway to spiritual growth as well as a pathway to community connections. During these times, we need to connect with one another, reaffirm our values together and explore our own thoughts about our monthly topics.

UUCG is also offering affinity groups, like Men's Group, Women's Group (the Open Circle), and Alphabet SoUUup for our LGBTQ+ community. These are also small groups that meet to share, support one another, and enjoy being together. Please come to UUCG, find a group either here at Connecting Within or within one of our other ministries. We are stronger as a community when we spend time simply getting to know one another.

With joy,
Lisa



**UUCG
Book Group
Wednesday
August 27th
at 7:00pm
Online via Zoom**

**Aug. Selection:
*Small Things Like These***

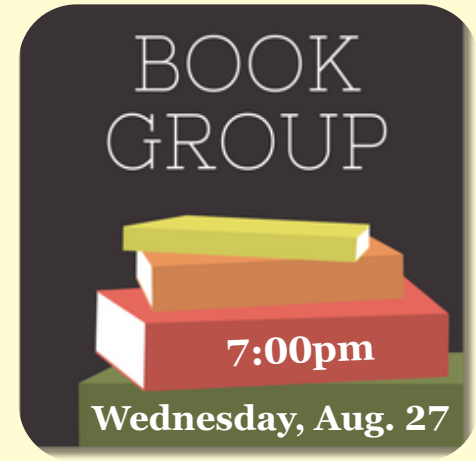
by Claire Keegan

An international bestseller, *Small Things Like These* is a deeply affecting story of hope, quiet heroism, and empathy from one of our most critically lauded and iconic writers.

[Learn more here...](#)



Ministry of Connecting Within



ONGOING OPPORTUNITIES



Alphabet SoUUp - In Person and Online: 1st Monday at 6:30pm, potluck served. <https://zoom.us/j/99002444085>



Book Group - Online: 4th Wednesday at 7:00pm <https://zoom.us/j/144736833>



Covenant Groups - *Returns in September! Registration will open soon!*



Game Night - In Person: 1st Friday at 6:30pm. All ages welcome!



Men's Group - In Person: 2nd Saturday at 9:00am



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



QUUest - Adults: In Person-4th Friday at 6:30pm

QUUest Jr. - Youth: In Person-2nd Friday at 7:00pm



Spiral Scouts - *Is on break for the Summer and will return in the Fall*



Women's Group: The Open Circle - In Person: 4th Saturday at 10:00am



Yarns from the Heart - In Person and Online: 1st and 3rd Wednesdays at 10:00am. <https://zoom.us/j/98096623472>

CHECK OUT THE CONNECTING WITHIN BULLETIN BOARD



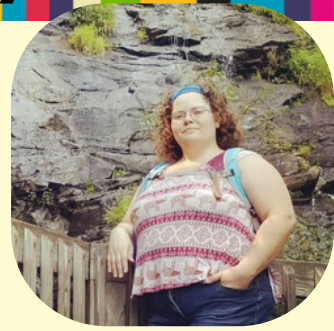
Connecting within starts with presence—pausing to breathe, reflect, and truly see the beauty around us. As you walk through the doors of UUCG, capture the moments that bring you joy and share in the collective appreciation of this sacred space.

Ministry of Connecting Beyond



Connection, Memory, and a New Life

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



As summer winds down and many in our community return from vacations and travel, I've found myself becoming steady—present through the quiet weeks, tending to both ministry and the deep inner work of becoming a parent. While others return, I have been reminded of something timeless: love.

For me, this season has been less about going away and more about going inward. I'm 14 weeks pregnant now, and with each passing week, I find myself reflecting on where I've come from—what has shaped me, who has guided me, and what I want to pass on (mainly thanks to my therapist). At the center of these reflections has continuously been my grandmother, Min—short for Minny.

Growing up, I spent most of my summer with her and Papa. Min wasn't just my grandmother; she was my mentor and guide. Her presence lives in some of my most cherished memories. What I remember most vividly is her spiritual practice and how it created space for her community. Min was part of a vibrant Buddhist community and I often watched her host Gongyo at her home. At the time, I didn't fully understand the meaning behind the chants or the sacred gathering till I got older, but I always knew it was special.

After Gongyo, there would be food and conversations that opened windows to a world much larger than my own. Culture, identity, faith, resilience, all around her kitchen table and den. I realize now how much those moments influenced my values and my openness to others. It wasn't until later in life that I began to engage in Gongyo myself, but those early impressions had already taken root.

Now, preparing for the next chapter of my life as a parent, I feel called to return to the love I first experienced with Min. Not just her love for me,

but the love she shared with her community, her spiritual devotion, and her belief in connection across differences. That legacy is one I want to share with our child. Tim and I are already imagining what it means to raise someone with curiosity about people, places, cultures, and practices—to cultivate not just kindness, but a genuine openness to the beauty of the world.



As our UUCG community reconnects and returns to shared rhythms after summer's quietness, I find myself holding space for both continuity and change. I haven't stepped away, but I have been transforming. Steeped in memory, grounded in spiritual practice, and preparing for the sacred unknown ahead, I am returning too—not from a trip, but to love itself. The kind of love Min taught me. The kind that expands across generations and cultures. The kind that connects us beyond the surface and deep into the heart of who we are. This is my practice now. Returning to love—for me, for our baby, and for our family.

Ministry of Connecting Beyond

UUCG, I Hear You!

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

After our Leadership Retreat, I spent some time thinking about all the great work the Board and Shared Ministry Council did together. I left feeling inspired and full of ideas — some already in motion, and others I'll revisit after the baby arrives.

I also had the chance to go through your survey responses and I just want to say: thank you. I hear you and I'm so grateful for your thoughtful suggestions and your care for this community. You want more connection — with each other and with groups that share our values — and I love that, because that's exactly where we're headed.

I already see the momentum building. A picnic? I can't wait to work together with you to help plan and put this in motion. More fundraisers and events for the community? Yes and yes! I am here to work together with the team you bring together to move this forward. Connecting with partner organizations? You're reaching out. Planning events, sharing ideas, making things happen? I'm here to work on this together with you! And I'm so thankful for the torch you've taken up.

As I prepare to take some time off, I trust that this good work will keep going — not because one person is leading it, but because all of us are. Connecting Beyond is something we all do together and you're showing up beautifully.

To everyone already helping us connect in new ways — thank you. I'm so excited for what we're building together.

With gratitude,
Candice

THANK YOU TO OUR ORGANIZATION LEADERS

Give Away the Plate

Kimberly Graham-Pfeffer

Lorena Gay-Griffin

Familias Juntas

Lorena Gay-Griffin

Lawrenceville Co-op

Carol Pinto

Gwinnett Interfaith Alliance

Barbara Stahnke

Citizens Climate Lobby

Terry Welsher

El Refugio

JoAnn Weiss

UUA Side with Love

Barbara Stahnke

Ministry of Connecting Beyond

“Small Wins Do Not Balance the Equation”

*Jane Nelson, UUCA, Former Public Service Commission (PSC) Staffer
Reported by Barbara Stahnke, Good Trouble Organizer, UUCG*



Sparked by UUCG's Good Trouble, Climate Justice Revival, and Green Sanctuary ministries coming together and identifying a place of collective power, we have partnered with amazing UUs in the great state of Georgia to change policy that impacts each of us and our fellow Georgians. Our project with the Public Service Commission was exciting, energizing, and, as usual when one is fighting for the oppressed, somewhat depressing (in this after-action moment ONLY, because we must keep fighting).

We had UUCG folks showing up at two major public comments for the Integrated Resource Plan. We had UUs from other congregations in Metro Atlanta show up too! At the June 23rd event, the UUs from Savannah showed up and showed out. They drove up that morning to make public comments at the PSC. I was so inspired by their effort.

Between UUs from across GA, Interfaith Partners, Organizational Partners, and our UU T-Shirts from Side with Love, we enabled all the public comments on the 23rd to be heard. The public comments group were advised that because so many people had signed up to make public comment, the Commissioners would stop public comment at the one-hour mark. They wanted us to give up. But did we...NO WAY. With the inspiration of Josie Mitz and Rev. Hammamy from Side with Love, we learned and practiced some Climate Focused Justice/Protest songs right there in the hearing room. We planned to sing these songs if we were stopped from speaking. (The government was already recording the events in the hearing room.) The PSC staff came back prior to the comment period starting and advised all the folks in the room that the PSC would hear all comments. (I was called, as a leader of the action, to talk to a Capital Sergeant (Police) to make sure that our action would not happen because of the time extension. I advised, if EVERYONE gets to speak our action was not necessary.) EVERYONE SPOKE. So many different folks commented including loads of UUs with special kudos to the Savannah folks.

[CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL ARTICLE](#)

**Side With Love
Denounces IRS Decision
Undermining Johnson
Amendment, Reaffirms
Church-State Separation**

[Affirms Commitment to Separation of Church and State](#)

The IRS recently made news by suggesting that clergy be allowed to endorse political candidates to their churches. While this potential change surfaced as part of a lawsuit the IRS is involved in, no changes to IRS policies or the laws governing political activity for nonprofits have been finalized or fully enacted.

Ministry of Connecting Beyond

Getting Involved in Community Elections

by Denise Benshoof

In August, people who organize voting are gearing up for the November 4th elections here in Gwinnett County.

There are no federal or state legislative elections scheduled for 2025 in Georgia. The power of the vote this year is centered on 2 open seats on the state Public Service Commission and local municipal elections.

Two non-partisan ways to be involved are to register voters or help with voter education. Our “UU the Vote” initiative (<https://uuthevote.org/>) promotes being politically involved. The League of Women Voters (<https://www.lwv.org/local-leagues/lwv-gwinnett-county>) is a nonpartisan group that registers folks to vote and encourages election participation.

If you want to vote in both elections, expect to vote in two different places. The state election will be handled by the county, and voting will take place at county polling places. The Gwinnett County Elections Board website has the deadlines for getting an absentee ballot and mailing it, and the advanced-voting calendar. (<https://www.gwinnettcounty.com/departments/elections>)

Local elections will be held at city halls or other municipal buildings. Check your local city website for election information and where the voting will be held.

If you'd like to run in a council race, each city has qualifications, applications, application payments, and deadlines for applying listed on their websites. While every city's qualifications are different, Lilburn has a good qualifying packet posted that can give guidance on what to ask. (<https://www.cityoflilburn.com/DocumentCenter/View/5670/Qualifying-Information---Candidates-2025>)

If you're interested in becoming a poll worker, this county site explains the different jobs, pay scales, working hours, and when workers will be paid: <https://www.gwinnettcounty.com/departments/elections/pollofficialapplication>.

There are also different kinds of poll watchers and monitors.



The Lawrenceville Cooperative Ministry has been serving the citizens of Gwinnett County, Georgia since 1995, that seeks to care for those in the Lawrenceville and Dacula communities. We are an emergency food bank helping those in need by providing food, personal care items and connections to other helping resources. One of our primary goals is to help clients get back on their feet.

FOOD DISTRIBUTION HOURS

MONDAY 5-7 pm

WEDNESDAY 9 am-noon

FRIDAY 9 am-noon

***BY APPOINTMENT ONLY**

(See QR code)



All guests will need to bring a picture ID for every adult in the family and some form of ID for each child with their birthdate on it (Birth Certificate, Passport, Immunization form, Prescription Bottle, etc...). A piece of mail (ex. a bill) dated within 30 days showing your address must also be brought each visit.

Ministry of Connecting Beyond



Join Side With Love for **The Gathering**, a monthly virtual event from Side With Love designed to offer: Spiritual Grounding – Strengthen your heart and spirit for the work ahead. Political Analysis – Understand the threats to democracy and justice. Collective Action – Organize with others to block anti-democratic forces and build a just and loving world.

Rev. Nancy will be offering spiritual grounding for the August Gathering, and our own Terry Welsher and Barbara Stahnke will be featured offering a presentation on Climate Justice!

[RSVP today!](#)

Every body is sacred. Side With Love unapologetically affirms that trans people are divine, that abortion is a blessing, and that no one is disposable. Attacks on identity is a part of a divide and conquer tactic that relies on the belief that one group's safety comes at the expense of another group's safety. Solidarity is the moral and strategic mandate of our time, and we must rise to challenge these attacks and build communities of care and safety for all. For current updates on critical issues in this political moment, including Climate, Gender and LGBTQ Justice, and Decriminalization & Immigration, visit the [Side With Love Action Center](#). There, you can also find immediate actions to take.

[The Woodlands](#) is a monthly online gathering designed for trans children, youth, and adults—as well as the parents and caregivers of trans people. Each session will begin with a shared message and grounding ritual, followed by breakout rooms tailored to different communities within our circle, and we come back together for a release. Sessions will be about an hour and a half. Each breakout room—co-facilitated by two chaplains—will offer space for meaningful check-ins where we can honor our grief, celebrate our joy, and support one another. The spirit of each room will reflect the people within it.

- The Sequoias Room: for parents and caregivers of trans people
- The Saplings Room: for trans children and youth
- The Sycamores Room: for trans adults

Our first gathering will be on Sunday, September 7, 2025, at 4:00 PM Eastern / 1:00 PM Pacific. The sessions will be on the first Sunday of the month thereafter. [Register](#) to join.

This pilot season will run from September 2025 through May 2026—a time for grace, growth, and connection. All of us on the UUA staff who helped bring The Woodlands to life hope you'll find meaningful community and support in this shared space.



Save the Date



Saturday,
September
13th

The Ordination of David Morgen to the Unitarian Universalist Ministry



November 15-16, 2025

Savannah, Georgia

SAVE the DATE

CONNECTING FOR A BRIGHTER GA FUTURE

Unitarian Universalist Georgia
Legislative Action Network
3rd Annual Conference

NETWORKING

SKILL
BUILDING

INSPIRATION

ACTION



REGISTRATION AND MORE TO FOLLOW

Ingathering Service: Water Ceremony

Sunday, September 7

Let us welcome one another
back to blessed community.






























Bring a container of
water from home to
be collected during
Worship Service.


























August 2025

for more information about any of these events,
please [visit our online Calendar](#)



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
31						

	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	Online via Zoom
	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
	Resisting Fascism	Discussion group centered on the book On Tyranny, by Timothy Snyder	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

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

Jason Pfeffer

Office Administrator

admin@uucg.org

Tuesdays, 10am-2pm

Fridays, 9am-2pm

Third Sundays, 10:30-12:30pm

LaTreisha McKay

Bookkeeper

lmckay@uucg.org

Mondays (remote), 5:00 pm-8:00 pm

Michael Parker

Choir Director

choirdirector@uucg.org

Tuesdays (on-site), 1:00 pm-6:00 pm

Becca Parker

Choir Director

choirdirector@uucg.org

Sunday mornings (On-site),

9:00am-12:00 pm