

# May 2024 Gwinnett News for Unitarian Universalists

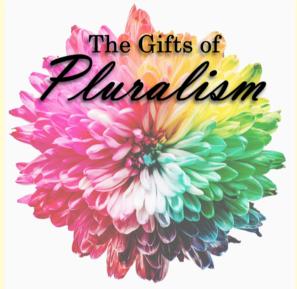
## The Gift of Pluralism

While pluralism is sometimes used as a synonym for diversity, even in a thesaurus, significant distinctions exist between the two terms. Diversity is the fact of multiculturalism, while pluralism is about engagement. Pluralism invites us to explore diversity and discover the ways in which we are enriched by it and recognizes diversity as an essential and integral part of the whole.

In our theology, pluralism is active and, therefore, demands curiosity, but it does not seek to change anyone. Because pluralism is about seeking and achieving mutual understanding, it does not require agreement. Pluralism doesn't ask us to merely tolerate differences; it impels us to build bridges across them. Relationship is primary.

Pluralism says, "Because we are in this together, let us make meaning of our togetherness."

Explore **The Gift of Pluralism** with us this month.



# Worship in May

Sundays at 11:00am Theme: The Gift of Pluralism Join us in-person or via Zoom <u>https://zoom.us/j/565460176</u>



#### May 5 Saying Yes! Founders' Day and New Member Recognition

Join us for this annual celebration of the founding of our congregation as we welcome our newest members and explore the many ways we say "yes" to living into our UU values together. *Rev. Nancy Palmer Jones (she/her), Service Leader Christiana McQuain (she/her), Service Leader* 

#### May 12

#### For Each Child That's Born....

An Affirmation for the Nurturer Inside Us All Daniel Bailey (he/him), Service Leader

#### May 19

#### **Embracing Our Differences**

We explore ideas of marginalization versus pluralism - how letting go of our fear of "the other" frees our hearts and minds to embrace and rejoice in our hu-people differences, and to avoid requiring acculturation or assimilation as a condition for group participation. *Bill Benshoof (he/him), Service Leader* 

#### May 26

#### Universes Inside Us All: The Liberation in Pluralism

Inside each of us, Rev. Julián Jamaica Soto reminds us, are "entire Universes ... expanding." If we want to be free, we must nurture and cherish our own expansiveness. Still, if we really want liberation—for ourselves and others—we need to be willing to fight for the "entire Universes inside of everyone else." This is the challenge and the gift of Pluralism: we are all so beautifully, so troublingly different, how can we hold us all in Love? Come hear stories of such acceptance and connection! We will honor Memorial Day too, with all our different experiences of it!

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

# After Hour

### Sundays at 12:30pm

#### 1st Sunday, May 5

Congregational Conversation Potluck

#### 2nd Sunday, May 12

Spiral Scouts (pre-registration required) Belief Explorers

**3rd Sunday, May 19** Sunday Tarot

**4th Sunday, May 26** Good Trouble: UU the Vote



# Message from Reverend Nancy A Journey of Expansiveness: The Gift of Pluralism

When I first walk into a Unitarian Universalist sanctuary in February 1997, I can feel my heart expand, as though I'm breathing again after holding my breath for so long. What strike me first are:

(a) the music—The choir makes a glorious sound, and we sing a hymn I know from growing up Methodist, except with more inclusive words!

(b) the language—The liturgy features a flowing mixture of secular sources and sacred words I learned in childhood. The minister quotes a novelist I love, and then builds a sermon around zippers, something about the way they interweave separate sides in order to hold things together?

(c) the space—The sanctuary at All Souls in Manhattan is a huge vaulted place, with light streaming in through clear glass windows. There is room to breathe and to imagine something more than our struggling daily lives.

After that first love-struck experience, I gradually begin to understand what pluralism means in this religion, and how deeply rooted it is in our way of looking at life. Pluralism, as I hear it then, means welcoming in a great flood of wisdom from religious traditions around the world, as well as from science, personal experience, philosophy, and art. Wow! This search for meaning connects us all—I can feel it! I can hear it expressed and encouraged in this congregation!

It's really this pluralism—the recognition of many different paths, theologies, truths, and wisdom—that make me a deeply committed Unitarian Universalist. My UU journey helps me reconnect with some sacred language and ideas that have deep meaning now that I can encounter them, both personally and in community, without any prescription or constriction about what rings true in my deepest self. And I learn new ways of being, thinking, feeling, doing through the interchange—at school and in church—with so many different ways of making meaning. Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, Hindu, Pagan, Humanist, and more—these paths begin to weave a beautiful new map for my soul.

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This month, as we here at UUCG explore the Gift of Pluralism as one of the Values proposed for the Article II revisions in our Unitarian Universalist Association by-laws—where we name who we are—my understanding of pluralism expands again. It's not just about this cornucopia of religious offerings we embrace. It's also about embracing other kinds of difference—our neurospiciness, our personalities, our gender and sexual identities and all the other identities we claim as most true to who we are, even our political affiliations and the multitude of languages we speak.

If we cherish our own internal Universe—"we contain multitudes," as Walt Whitman said—can we also cherish the Universe inside everyone else? What boundaries do we need to set, so cherishing this difference does not condone behavior that harms the most vulnerable among us?

At the beginning of April, during our Flower Ceremony, those attending in person and online claimed the flower from the skit that we felt most like that day. As you can see from the pictures, we had many more Violets—shy and kind—than Dandys—big and brash—that day. Here at UUCG, there's room to breathe for all of us. And there's room to spare so that on this journey, we all continue to expand.

Welcome home!

With Love at the center, Rev. Nancy

### **Healthy ValUUes**

By Dan Kelly (he/him)

Message from the Board What does a financially healthy congregation look like to you?

The April Congregational Conversation revisited this Open Question with a discussion of the financial well-being of UUCG. In addition to a presentation of how our congregation raises and spends money, we engaged in activities designed to help us contextualize what our giving and receiving means to our mission at UUCG: "We strive to be a radically welcoming sanctuary in a green space. We foster spiritual growth as we joyfully nurture connections and community within our walls and beyond."

We included resources from the UUA program "The Wi\$dom Path," which is being scheduled as a full program presentation in the next program year. We performed an exercise in which we identified "Names for Money." It was enlightening to see how we use language that reflects our feelings about money, and how that may influence our perception of financial health. We identified a lot of words that relate to sustenance: lettuce, butter, bacon, dough, salt, cheddar, sugar. We found that some of us have phrases that inflect a negative connotation: filthy lucre, loot, bones, scratch, dead presidents, greased palms. We also discovered that sometimes the use of certain words makes us feel better about the role of money in our lives and our faith: tithes, shells, emolument, wealth, pledge, stewardship.

A review of our annual budget and current pledge drive provided us insight into how we apply our resources, and how we can continue to grow as a community. Our Bylaws require of membership "a commitment of time, talent or treasure to UUCG." We all bring gifts in unique ways, and that is our greatest strength. We ask that each member of our congregation look earnestly at what they can financially give without sacrificing their safety or personal well-being.

Our final activity was a fun exploration of what we value most. Each attendee was given three "dollars," and we provided baskets for different areas of expenditures that the Board has received requests to fund outside of our essential operational costs. Here is what we found that UUCG members value most:

	A/V improvements = \$4
Staff raises/additional hours = \$14	Community outreach = \$4
Building fund = \$10	Memorial gardens = $\$3$
Faith Development = \$10	U ,
Minister reserve fund = $$5$	New roadside sign = \$2
	UUA retreat = \$1
A kitchen remodel = $4$	New carpets $=$ \$0

We thank everyone who participated in the conversation, and we are grateful for the feedback and responses that help us, as a Board, prioritize the ValUUes of UUCG.

In covenant, Dan Kelly President-elect of the UUCG Board of Trustees

### Congregational Business Meeting May 19

Voting members should already have received items to review before the vote. Please send feedback to the board by May 18th.

Ballots sent out -May 5th

#### Voting close -May 19th at 12:30pm

### **Auction Update**

To date, we have received \$5,765 in donations in connection with the auction! A big thank you to all who contributed to the success of the auction! We appreciate our volunteers, staff, donors, and bidders. Your feedback is valuable to us; please share your thoughts before 5/19 by completing the survey provided below.

#### Share Auction Feedback Here

Give Away the Plate Recipient

The Give Away the Plate recipient for the second quarter of 2024 is the <u>Unitarian Universalist</u> <u>Ministry for Earth (UUMFE).</u> The Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth is a seedbed for spiritual grounding and education that inspires deep practices of Earth care, justice, and flourishing for all.



#### UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST MINISTRY FOR EARTH

Respect Life. Restore Earth. Renew Spirit.

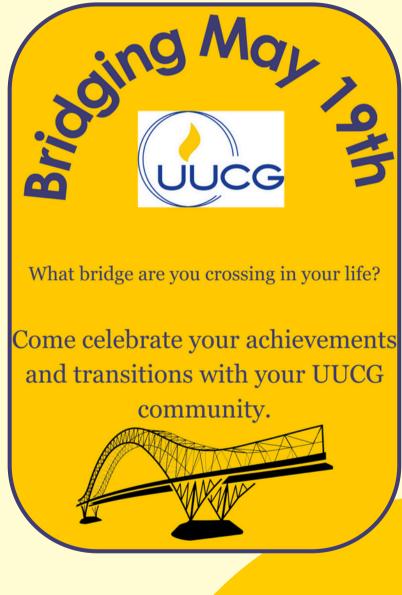


Did You Know: It takes a drop of water 90 days to travel the entire Mississippi River

# Special Services in May

**Did You Know:** The "German" part of German chocolate cake comes from an American man—not the country. Specifically, it's named after Sam German, who worked for Baker's Chocolate Company at the time.





### Lay Ministry of Radical Welcome

### Building Bridges by Bill Benshoof (he/him)

As a teen, my Sister (now a Clinical Psychologist) had a poster on her wall:

"People are Lonely Because They Build Walls Instead of Bridges."

I think of the wisdom of that poster when I hear this great lyrical excerpt from a hymn by Brian Wren:

Love makes a bridge from heart to heart, and hand to hand. Love finds a way when laws are blind, and freedom banned. Love breaks the walls of language, gender, class, and age. Love gives us wings to slip the bars of every cage. Love lifts the hopes that force and fear have beaten down. Love breaks the chains and gives us strength to stand our ground.

As I grow and learn about life and love, my mentors speak to me about ways to love others that reach deep into our shared needs as humans. One such mentor, David Morgen, who recently was UUCG's Ministerial Intern for two years, summed it up when he described one of the greatest challenges to building those bridges of love- **PRESENCE**.

A key component of Radical Welcome is its focus on relationship-building. When folks muster the courage and curiosity to cross our threshold, a big part of my Commission is to meet them with compassion. Science tells us that, comparing DNA, we are 99.6 percent identical. And, as different as that small point-four percent of our DNA allows us to be, we are fundamentally drawn into connection, relationship, and interdependence.

To be fully present to another person's speech, story, and thoughts- to listen with such focus and intensity that understanding grows, trust is inspired, and we connect deeply with the hearts and minds of others- is an essential part of the "Discipline of Love" our proposed new UU Values & Covenant statement speaks of. It is also a key component of the "Radical Welcome" I am commissioned to invite everyone to practice.

This gift of listening and the empathy that grows along with it is key to living in peace with one another despite our wide range of thoughts, ideas, and interests. It is part of a practice the Einhorn Collaborative publication, "A Call to Connection," calls "bridging:"

"When we bridge, we see demographic change and our diverse identities as positive and enhancing who we are.

Bridging calls on us to engage in healthy dialogue and requires us to listen deeply. Bridging does not mean abandoning your identity.

Bridging means acknowledging our shared humanity, rejecting that there is a 'them,' and moving towards a future where there is instead a new 'us.'

For when we bridge, we not only open up to others, we also open up to change within ourselves – where we can participate in creating a society built on belonging."

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# Lay Ministry of Radical Welcome

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Bridging is an opportunity to grow your circle of human concern, and to open yourself to the likelihood of finding real joy and fulfillment in relationships with those who are unlike you in fundamental ways. Mack McCarter, founder and coordinator of Community Renewal International in Shreveport, LA, puts it best:

"When I meet you, I assume there's a bridge from my heart to yours- and I am coming over!"

Bridging asks all of us to hold big differences and deep disagreements without dehumanizing the other person; never reducing them to a caricature or seeing them as less worthy of health and happiness than we are.

Those foundational needs can be the starting point to ensuring common dignity—recognizing that another person or group has their own human drives, tastes, values, goals, and worldview, just like we do.

As Chimamanda Adichie emphasizes in her TED Talk, "The Danger of a Single Story," we must learn to question the single story we may tell ourselves about others, and to consider how every human holds a complex narrative of joys and pains, gains and losses, privilege and poverty.

Crucially, bridging work is not about erasing differences or persuading someone to change their mind or identity, but is instead about increasing our own understanding. This requires asking questions, suspending judgment, and committing to the bridging relationship over time—not just making a one-time gesture. One way to do that is by continually seeking shared identities above and beyond those which divide us.

To be clear, bridging does not guarantee the comfort of common ground or compromise. It asks each of us to seek authenticity and mutuality while taking into account potential disparities in power. As explained by Rev. Jennifer Bailey, "Social change happens at the speed of relationships. And relationships move at the speed of trust."

Over time, bridging asks us to be willing to let go of our perceptions and preconceived ideas of who people are and why they act in certain ways, replacing these with a true portrait of the other's humanity. As challenging as it can be, the personal and societal benefits of bridging are profound. Whether connecting across age, race, nationality, religion, ideology, or something else, learning how to positively relate to someone perceived as an "other" contributes to less stress, better personal health, and a stronger social fabric.

I believe that our UU values uniquely position us to be a unifying force in a world that is less centered on the "traditional Church" than ever before. For me, being about that work, particularly with those folks who are seeking the beloved community we are building, is a naturally energizing and motivating practice. I invite everyone to join me!

# Lay Ministry of Green Space

# **Property Beautification**

Our monthly Property Beautification Day was a blooming success! Thanks to every pair of hands that dug, planted, and laughed with us, our grounds have never looked more inviting. Together, we grow more than just flowers; we cultivate community and connection. Here's to the beauty we create, inside and out!

Special thanks to the family of Don Graff (pictured below) who help to maintain the parking lot peninsula in his memory.

Be sure to join us on May 4th for the next Beautification day!







## Lay Ministry of Green Space



PRESENTED BY GREATER GWINNETT SIERRA CLUB & UUCG GREEN TEAM

# FILM SCREENING & FREE CONVERSATION

A century after her grandfather claimed his freedom from slavery and the family land, Elsie Herring and her North Carolina community fight the world's largest pork corporation for their freedom to enjoy fresh air, clean water, and a life without the stench of manure. *Watch the trailer: <u>smellofmoneydoc.com</u>* 

Guided discussion afterwards with light refreshments provided

### MAY 24TH / 7 PM

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF GWINNETT 12 BETHESDA CHURCH RD. LAWRENCEVILLE, GA 30044



### Lay Ministry of Connecting Within

#### Connecting Within by Lisa Kiel (she/her)

What dreams are we making a reality in our community? What types of connections and interactions do we value? This past month, Covenant Groups, Trans Inclusion in Congregations, and Sharing the Journey wrapped up their Spring Cycles. I want to thank everyone who participated in these groups and led these groups. Each of these groups is designed and offered to promote deeper connections among our congregants. Small group ministries provide participants with time to listen, reflect and share, and are part of UUCG because they encourage us to build a strong, diverse and compassionate community, giving us a chance to put our UU values into practice.

This month we have two new groups:

Jason Pfeffer is leading an adult in-person QUUest group on 4th Fridays from 6-10 pm here at UUCG. (Registration is required.\*) All experience-level players, even beginners, are welcome and materials will be provided!

Ian Van Sice is facilitating a Men's Group on 2nd Saturdays beginning at 9 am. This inclusive group is open to all cis and trans folx who identify as male. Congregants, guests, and friends from our outside community are all welcome. Drop in on May 11th and join in the discussion!

All of these programs offered here at UUCG take time, a precious resource, both to plan and to lead. I encourage you to join a group or program here at UUCG and commit your time to participating with enthusiasm! Let's make some dreams into realities!

With Joy, Lisa

Lisa Lisa Lisa Lisa Lisa Lisa Lisa A dream You dream together -John Lennon

### Ongoing Connecting Within Opportunities

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

**Chalice Circle** - monthly meeting set by members

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

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

**QUUest** - Adults: In Person: 1st Friday at 6pm, 4th Friday at 6pm\* Online:, 3rd Friday at 7 pm QUUest Jr. - Youth: 2nd Friday at 7pm

**Spiral Scouts** - In-Person 2nd Sunday following Sunday service

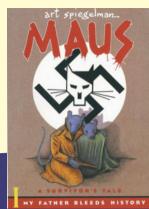
**Music Night** - In Person every Thursday night starting at 6:30

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

\***Registration is open for a New QUUest Cohort**, meeting on the 4th Fridays of the month from 6-10 pm in-person at UUCG. First meeting is May 24th!

See next page for link to register

## Lay Ministry of Connecting Within



### Book Group May 22 at 7pm May Selection: Maus by Art Spiegelman

A brutally moving work of art—widely hailed as the greatest graphic novel ever written—Maus recounts the chilling experiences of the author's father during the Holocaust, with Jews drawn as wide-eyed mice and Nazis as menacing cats.

Maus is a haunting tale within a tale, weaving the author's account of his tortured relationship with his aging father into an astonishing retelling of one of history's most unspeakable tragedies. It is an unforgettable story of survival and a disarming look at the legacy of trauma.

Learn More...

# MEN'S GROUP

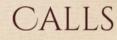
MEETS EVERY SECOND SATURDAY AT 9AM

Light breakfast will be provided



This group welcomes cis and trans maleidentified folx, along with all congregants, guests, and community members who want to gather for fellowship and contemplation on topics usually considered men's issues.

### ADVENTURE



Ready to embark on an epic journey? Join our latest Dungeons & Dragons Campaign! Adventure awaits **every 4th Friday of the month from 6-10 pm**. No experience? No problem! No supplies? We've got you covered! All adventurers 18+ are welcome. Sign up now and let the quest begin!



# Lay Ministry of Connecting Beyond

#### In Support of Democracy...

#### **Georgia Elections**

All of our congressional representatives and state house representatives and senators are up for reelection this year and most have primary opposition. A crucial part of the May primary is that the nonpartisan judicial elections, including those for the Georgia Supreme Court, are held during on the primary date in even numbered years, and NOT during the November election. Early voting has already begun.

Only a few of the judicial elections are contested (including one Georgia Supreme Court Justice), meaning all others are uncontested. So, **please do your research and make sure your voice is heard in the contested judicial elections**.

For more information about voting, including voting locations and sample ballots, go to the Georgia My Voter Page at <u>https://mvp.sos.ga.gov/</u>



### Action Event: Online Training Planting Seeds of Democracy: Georgia Election Defense Training

Join UU the Vote and Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights (GLAHR) for an Election Defense and Support training and preparation call. This gathering will act to recruit Georgiabased Unitarian Universalists ready to take a shift doing election defense on May 21, 2024, Primary Election day in Georgia. Join us as we ground, get to know each other and talk about the role of election defense and protection in our work.

Register here to participate.

#### Resource for supporting democracy:

A fundamental value of American democracy is the common good: that which is beneficial for all members of the community. Upholding it is a goal of advocacy and outreach work.

Find h<u>ere some practices</u> that encourage democratic virtues like fairness, social conscience, service, and civic engagement.

<u>Source:</u> <u>SpiritualityandPractice.com</u>

# Lay Ministry of Connecting Beyond



### Save the Date! Upcoming Events



### Classes & Events Purchase at https://uucg.betterworld.org/ From the Auction



### \$30 Online



### **African Feast** Victoria Fashakin

## June 2nd

Four Course African Feast full of flavor and stories from Victoria on the customs and traditions of Africa.

### Classes & Events From the Auction

### Purchase at <u>https://uucg.betterworld.org/</u>



\$15 Online



Animal Flow Class Claire Yurko May 18th 2 PM - 5 PM

Animal Flow is a ground based movement practice that challenges your whole body. Join Clair as she teaches you the new flow! \$20 Online



Breathwork Class Daniel Bailey May 18th 2 PM-5 PM

Breathwork is a very active breathing meditation with music that allows one to access internal feelings & transformation.

# **Two Spots Left!**



\$30 Online



Water Blooms Katrina Yurko

#### May 18th 2 PM - 5 PM

Come and enjoy the freedom of expression that painting in watercolor can give both the gardener and artist alike. We will draw and paint a variety of flowers and begin to abstract them so they have a personal artistic style.



\$30 Online



#### Tamale Making Rita Romero



Enjoy time with friends while you learn to spread masa on corn husks and stuff with meat. Making Tamales are easy and fun! They just take a bit of love and time!

# **Staff Hours**

Rev. Nancy Palmer Jones, Minister, <u>revnpj@uucg.org</u> 678-558-4834 Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays: 10:00 am. - 4:00 pm First and Third Saturdays: 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

**Christiana McQuain, Coordinator of Family Ministries**, <u>cmcquain@uucg.org</u> Tuesdays, 9:00am-4:00pm; Fridays (on-site), 9:00am-2:00pm; most Sundays (on-site) 8:30am-2:00pm

Aline Harris, Office Administrator, <u>aharris@uucg.org</u> Tuesdays 9:30 am-1:00 pm; Fridays (on-site) 10:00 am-1:00 pm; most Sundays (on-site) 10:30 am-12:30 pm

**Michael Parker, Choir Director**, <u>choirdirector@uucg.org</u> Office hours (on-site) Tuesdays, 1:00pm-6:00pm, by appointment

**Becca Parker, Choir Director**, <u>choirdirector@uucg.org</u> On-site Sunday mornings (except 4th Sundays)

**LaTreisha McKay, Bookkeeper**, <u>lmckay@uucg.org</u> Available for communication on Monday evenings, 5:00-8:00pm



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

# May 2024

Ø	Yarns from the Heart	Knitters and crocheters gather to create prayer shawls and baby blankets for members and friends and the wider com- munity. This group is open to all fiber artists.	1st and 3rd Wednesdays 10:00am	Online Email ad- min@uucg.org For access
I	Music Night	Bring your instrument and join us! All are welcome to jam or listen.	Every Thursday 6:30pm	In-Person
The second secon	Property Beauti- fication Day	Monthly projects to benefit the building and grounds. All skills and abilities are welcome.	1st Saturday 10:00am	In-Person
<b>"</b>	Sylvan Sanctuary	Sylvan Sanctuary is the Mother Grove of the Druid Order of the Three Realms, a community of Druids walking per- sonal paths. All are welcome.	May 4th 6:00pm	In-Person
Ø	Food Bank Dropoff	We gather donations for the Lawrenceville Co-op food bank.	1st Sundays	In-Person
.Ô.	Congregational Conversations	Discussions centered around Unitarian universalism and our specific congregation. All are welcome.	1st Sunday 12:30pm	In-Person and Online Zoom: 565-460- 176
5	Covenant Choir	Choir gathers to rehearse for performance on Sunday mornings during Worship Services.	Every Tuesday 7:00pm	In-Person
ď	Men's Group (Inclusive)	This group welcomes cis and trans male-identified folx, along with all congregants, guests, and community mem- bers who want to gather for fellowship and contemplation on topics usually considered men's issues.	2nd Saturdays 9:00am	In-Person
6	Spiral Scouts	An all-gender scouting group that focuses on nature-based learning and activities. We are open to children ages 3-12.	2nd Sundays 12:30pm	In-Person
	Belief Explorers	A group of Unitarian Universalists and others who are in- terested in exploring the sources of world faith traditions. All are welcome.	2nd Sundays 12:30pm	In-Person and Online Zoom: 896-987- 304
.Ô.	Board Meeting	Open to the congregation at large. If you have something to discuss that you would like added to the agenda, please email board@uucg.org at least three weeks ahead of time.	3rd Wednesdays 7:00pm	Online Zoom: 956-757- 31773
	Green Team Meeting	All who are interested in environmental issues are wel- come.	3rd Saturday 9:30am	Online Zoom:
Ø	Tarot Sunday	A discussion about all things Tarot and a Guided Medita- tion inspired by the monthly topic.	3rd Sundays 12:30pm	In-Person
.Ô.	Congregational Business Meeting	Members will vote on the proposed changes to the by-laws and proposed upcoming nominating committee and board	May 19th 12:30pm	Voting is in- person and online
	Book Group	All who have read the book are invited to attend.	4th Wednesdays 7:00pm	Online Zoom: 144-736- 833
$\bigotimes$	Dungeons and Dragons	Register now for a new D&D party!	4th Fridays 6:00pm	In-Person
	Green Team Film	"The Smell of Money" Film Screening	May 24th 6:30pm	In-Person
.Ô.	Good Trouble	We invite you into discussion about an issue that we (community, society, world) are facing currently, and spe- cific ways that you can get involved in working for change.	4th Sundays 12:30pm	In-Person and Online Zoom: 145-984- 149

## May 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday			
				2	3	4			
5	6	7	8	9	10				
12	13	14	<sup>15</sup>	16	17	18			
<sup>19</sup>	20	21	22	23	24	25			
26	27	28	29	30	31				