

## Religious Exploration

Preparing children for this life, every week.

February 8th - A Religious Exploration fundraiser

### SUUper Bowl Sunday

During Coffee Hour - after the Senior High Youth **preach!**

Sit down with it bowls & take-away quarts will be offered.

**\$8/bowl : \$15/2 bowls : \$25/family : \$15/quart**

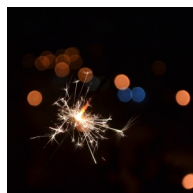
Come and get your belly-full!



### Tending the Spark: An Evening Gathering

Feb 8 & 22 at 5 pm

Our Sunday evening alternative service, Tending the Spark (or Spark for short), gathers in Atherton Hall on the 2nd & 4th Sundays of each month. This intentional gathering remembers the ancient ways of ancestors who circled and sang under the night sky. Each service aims to recall our inter-connection as beings embedded in the web of life.



On Feb 8, join us for *We Sing the Body Electric: A song circle with the Spark Band. Join us for a meditative journey through sound and spirit. In this experience, simple, repeating musical phrases open space for presence, grounding, and connection to the sacred. Together, we'll weave sound into a living meditation — a circle of joy, harmony, and embodied being.*

Everyone is welcome. If you have friends or family members disinclined toward "church" who still long for community, please invite them. We have families who attend both Sunday morning and evening and are fed in different ways. Every evening closes with a shared meal of soup & bread with potluck sides provided by participants. It's an experiment in community – come explore.

***Tending the Spark: Where the Body Remembers, the Spirit Sings***

### Winter-Spring Adult Faith Development Offerings

For details, see page 4 of this newsletter.

**New:**

- Building the World We Dream About on Feb. 8
- Shared Pulpit Worship Class begins Feb 15
- UU Elevator Speech

**Continuing (newcomers welcome)**

- Biblical Literacy for UUs
- Telling Our Stories
- Living Well
- Tai Chi

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## From Our Minister

### *Dwell in Possibility*

It takes a lot of energy to dwell in a space of ambiguity. I imagine I am not the only one tired of not knowing what is going to happen in the world around us. I'm not the only one feeling exhausted.

We can take some comfort in knowing we are not alone; that humans have faced immense challenges in the past and found their way through. People around the world are suffering from war and famine and injustice and oppression – and surviving as best they can. To have lived this long on the planet, we've had to have some sort of perseverance gene, a pull forward which kept us moving through the darkest days.

Sunday marks Imbolc on the calendar – also the feast of Candlemas, with Groundhog day following on Monday. Days which ancients and modern folk mark as halfway through winter. A place of hope in the rising light and celebration that we've come this far.

On Sunday we'll have ten hours and two minutes of daylight – a jump of nearly an hour since the winter solstice. I feel it when I get up in the morning. Despite the extended bitter cold, the light is returning. My body knows.

I've spent this past week at an online conference with Unitarian Universalist ministers. I watched four worship services led by colleagues – all trying to wrestle with what keeps us moving; what we need, what we can offer to our communities.

The answer for many was fighting. It was protesting and training and resisting authoritarianism. The answer for some was remembering our connection to the earth; creating rich compost through our intentions, our connection to one another, our giving back to a hurting world. Most reminded us that we are all in it together. That none of us are alone. It helps.

During the next few months, the days will continue to grow longer. Light will return to the Northern Hemisphere. Frigid days will be replaced by warm breezes and noticeable greening. All cycles come to completion as the world turns and we hope and pray that the latest descent into madness in our country will find its conclusion as well.

But while conditions are bad outside, one truth we hold onto is that together, we can create the warmth, the light, the compassion and the kindness that is so needed. We may not know when or where or how, but we know that love is the core of our beingness; that love is ours to give and receive and share. That love will see us through.

~ Rev Pam

### *Hopes for the Future*

On January 25<sup>th</sup>, service leader Emma Farrell asked the congregation to write down your hopes for the congregation. When I got back into my office, I found the basket slips of paper with all of your hopes. They made me smile in pride and love for this beautiful congregation. I'm sharing here so you can share that warm feeling.

- I hope for this congregation to come together in joy and support of a new minister later this year.
- Hope for unity & strength



### *Hopes for the Future, cont'd*

- That our congregation will work to see that our elections this November renders President Trump and his family clique completely feckless.
- I hope we find the strength to grow together as a community through the hard times.
- Hope this congregation moves more toward mutual aid for immigrants and their families.
- I hope we could reach out to the local community more. Find the people in the most need and be a beacon for them.
- Strength, leadership, renewed hope.
- To hold that we live in community as we go through our own transition in seeking a new minister for our church. And to be fearless as we take action to ensure democracy continues.
- Increased community
- I hope for this congregation to blossom and grow in the coming years and on (with pictures of flowers)
- Continue to march for our lives.
- Continued leadership (new leadership) from a minister who can step into our congregation and take us forward in our work.
- Stability in uncertain times as we search for a new minister.
- Continued participation and growth.
- An immediate search with contract position for one year, w potential call. More environmental work interest.
- Ease and stability.
- To make change – bend the arc of history towards justice for all.
- Continued strong, loving, inspirational leadership.
- I wish that the loving open nature of our congregation becomes more visible in the greater area community.
- I hope we can all feel safe.
- Settled minister. 50's Group.
- I hope for continued strong community within and outreach to the community outside our walls.
- To do what needs to be done and to discern what that is.
- I hope for minister(s) as wonderful as Rev Pam & Rev Karen.
- I'd like CCUU to be a force for a return to a democratic government.
- A deepening of our congregation's strength and commitment to each other and the wider world. <3
- I hope for the congregation a shift from contemplation to one of action inspired by love for all parts of the web of life of which we are a part.
- Increasing involvement in the community.
- Wisdom. Patience.
- I hope for a continuing presence to show our moral service to the world.
- I see this church with a fabulous settled minister to take this congregation to a successful future.

(continued...)

## From the Board President

Dear Fellow Countryside Members and Friends –

Things at Countryside Church have certainly gotten more interesting and busier recently.

First, and most significantly, Rev Pam and Rev Karen publicly announced their retirements, effective at the end of this church year. That announcement was made just over two weeks ago (though it seems much longer ago than that). The timing was such that I, and some fellow Board members, were able to contact the UUA's Congregational Transitions Director, Christine Purcell, for advice on how to proceed. Accordingly, the Board decided at the January meeting to conduct a search for a contract minister. To refresh your memory, a contract minister search is conducted by a search team selected by the Board and the contract minister is hired by the Board for a specific term – one or two years, with an option to renew. This is different from the settled minister search process in which the congregation calls the minister through a vote at a special congregational meeting for an unspecified, open-ended term. Of course, a contract minister may be called later by the congregation, but the call decision is not made at the beginning of the contract period. The Board also decided that the contract search team will consist of five members. They are Board members, Pat Wydell and Elizabeth Van Orden, along with Judy Ball, Michael Lunter and Amy Zukoski. Although I am not a member of the search team, I will follow their activities closely and will work closely with Pat Wydell, who will head up the team.

The search team is in the process of preparing our congregational profile which will be posted to the UUA Ministry Search system, hopefully during the first week of February. If all goes well, the search team will have several qualified candidates to choose from and the Board will be able to make an announcement of our new contract minister no later than March 23. Things are moving quickly! I will be reporting back to you on a regular basis.

Next, thanks to the tireless efforts of our Treasurer, Rick Rayborn, and the ad hoc capital projects team he assembled, it appears that we will be able to install a second array of solar panels on the church roof. Early last year, the Board was approached by a donor, who is not a member of the church, but who often attends Green Sanctuary committee meetings, and who made a generous offer to fund the second array of solar panels for the church. Shortly after Rick began as Treasurer last July, he reached out to the donor to determine specifically what the donor expected the church to do with his donation. In addition, because of changes in the Federal Law related to solar panels and the associated tax credits, a decision needed to be made quickly to determine if installing a second array of solar panels made economic sense. Rick got up to speed on the Federal law changes and determined that it would make sense to install the solar panels if installation could begin in the first half of 2026. Knowing that, Rick began to get several quotes from solar panel vendors, and, with the help of Steve Black, several quotes



## From the Board Prez, cont'd

from roofing vendors for enhancements to the roof over which the solar panels would be installed. At the January meeting, the Board approved a contract with a solar panel vendor and a roofing contractor. Finally, Rick and I recently met with the donor to clarify and document the terms of the donation. I am pleased to report that, just this past week, the donor made his promised donation to the church. As a result, I will soon be signing contracts with the solar panel vendor and the roofing contractor. If all goes well, the roofing enhancements will begin in late March, and the solar panel installation will begin shortly thereafter. I understand that once the new solar panels are installed, we will have doubled our solar generating capacity. That's impressive.

Finally, our annual stewardship campaign (pledge drive) will begin in a few weeks. The theme for this year's campaign is "Rooted in Love, Growing Our Future". More detailed information will be available soon. I trust that you all will pledge generously to sustain this amazing spiritual community.

Thank you,  
Gary LaBedz

## Board of Trustees Meetings

**3rd Weds–Feb 18 at 7 pm**

Board of Trustees meetings are open to the congregation for people who want to observe. To be on the agenda, contact the Board President at least one week in advance. If you plan to attend, contact the Board President, prez@ccuu.org, for the meeting information.

## From Lay Ministry Team

Let the Lay Pastoral Ministry Team know your joys, concerns, and gratitudes: <https://ccuu.org/joys-concerns-gratitudes/>.



Remember that we have votives in the back of the sanctuary that you may wish to light on Sunday morning with a prayer regarding a hardship in your life or that of a loved one.

## UUPMI Workshop: Healing Prison Trauma

**Sat, Feb 7, 1-3 pm, with hybrid options**

Join UU Prison Ministry of IL to learn about the trauma of prison as well as the challenges of healing when in reentry. This circle-based workshop is for those who are healing as well as for loved ones, support folk, and those who minister with and accompany those who are incarcerated or formerly incarcerated. [Kindly Register here.](#)



(continued...)

Register online at <https://ccuu.breezechms.com/form/AFD2026-winter>

### NEW:

#### Building the World We Dream About: A 90-Minute Journey Toward Racial Justice: Sunday 2/8/2026,



**11:30-1pm.** This is a 90-minute workshop on implicit bias. This is a practical, welcoming session that helps us notice the “automatic assumptions” we all pick up from culture and repetition, and how those habits can shape our interactions in small but meaningful ways.

This workshop fits with who we are as a UU community because our faith asks us to keep widening the circle of concern and live our values with intention. We will focus on learning and practice, not perfection. You do not need any prior knowledge, and you will never be put on the spot. You can always pass during activities. Here's what to expect:

- Clear, simple definitions and real-life examples
- A few guided reflection activities Time to talk in small groups and reflect together
- A chance to leave with one personal next step and one idea we can carry forward as a congregation

If you've been curious but unsure where to start, this is a gentle entry point. If you've been doing this work for a while, it's a chance to deepen it in community. *Facilitator: Mari Van Meter*

#### The Shared Pulpit Worship Class: Sundays, 11:30–1 pm. 2/15, 2/22, 3/15, 3/22, 4/19, 4/26.



This class is designed to introduce or strengthen sermon writing skills and prepare for presentation on Sunday mornings. Anyone is welcome to attend – especially folks considering joining the worship team in the future.

There will be four sessions exploring the work of creating reflective, passionate and theologically grounded sermons and homilies. The class will finish with each participant presenting a sermon they have written over the final two dates. We will read from *The Shared Pulpit* by Erika Hewitt and *Thematic Preaching: An Introduction* by Jane Rzepka and Ken Sawyer (books will be available for purchase from the church office). Gather at 11:30 for nosh; class begins at 11:45. *Facilitator: Rev. Pam Rumancik.*

**UU Elevator Speech: Saturdays, 10-11 am; 3/7, 3/14, 3/21.** Need a way to quickly and succinctly describe where you go on Sunday morning for your spiritual participation or when someone says, “Never heard of Unitarian Universalists, what is it?” Join this 1-hour class that meets 3 consecutive Sundays at 11:30 am. Excellent for newer UUs, and also good



for longer-term members who would like to finetune their explanations. Interactive participation will encourage confidence in responding to curiosity and questions. *Facilitator: Denise Sepos*

### Continuing in the Spring:

*New participants are welcome to join us for the spring session. If you registered for the fall session, you do not need to re-register.*

#### Biblical Literacy for UUs: Sundays, 11:30 am–1:00 pm; 3/8, 3/29, 4/12, 5/3, 5/24, 5/31.

The Bible has inspired movements for liberation and legitimized horrific injustices. Its language and stories resonate through the literature and art of the Western world. How do we, as liberal seekers, skeptics, and UUs, understand it? This course will explore the Bible in historical context and reflect on some of its stories from a UU perspective. Topics in March through May will include the parables of Jesus, creation stories, the prophets, Paul's letters, Revelation, and the Psalms. *New participants are welcome at any time. Facilitators: Pat Wydell and Jeannie Scown*

### Ongoing:

*New participants are welcome to join these ongoing classes/groups. If you are already registered, you do not need to re-register.*

#### Telling Our Stories: 1st Wednesdays, 10 am–12 noon, through May 6.

Come and join this group of mature adults as we utilize a variety of materials as food for discussion about our lives today, aging, encounters with loss, grief, and end of life issues in a supportive and caring environment. *We plan to focus next on legacy writing with online Zoom sessions in January/February. New participants are welcome to register at any time. Facilitators: Becky Serpe, Lisa Christensen*

#### Living Well: 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays, 10 am–12 noon

**[ongoing].** Living Well is a discussion group that draws inspiration from the Blue Zones program. We meet monthly and explore living in ways that support engagement with others, exercise, a spiritual life, healthy eating, finding a purpose, and taking time to relax. We are currently reading *When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times* by Pema Chödrön, a collection of essays on facing difficulties in life based on Buddhist teachings. *Facilitators: Karolina Kozakiewicz and Leslie Peet*

#### Tai Chi – Thursday, 5:45-6:45 pm and Saturday, 10:30–11:30 am. Weekly January–March\*.

Tai Chi is an ancient practice that enhances health, concentration, and wellbeing. It can be practiced by people of all ages, sizes, shapes, and abilities. This class will focus on short movement sequences that increase flexibility, strength, and balance. The class is open to beginners and to those with prior experience. *Instructor: Melanie Terbovic, a certified Tai Chi teacher*  
\*NOTE: Tai Chi will not meet Feb 25-March 8.



## Wheel of the Year: Imbolc

February 2 is the date when Pagans celebrate Imbolc, a cross-quarter festival (i.e., midway between a solstice and an equinox), based on the Irish Celtic holiday marking the transition between Winter and Spring. It is also associated with the goddess Brigid, who is associated with smith-craft (in modern terms, any craft), healing, and poetry. She had a sanctuary at Kildare, Ireland, with a sacred pool said to heal and a flame that was always lit. The sanctuary later became a Christian convent when the goddess became St. Brigid. As far as is known, the significance of Imbolc for the Celts was the start of the lambing season and the renewal, reawakening of life, and of fertility as well as cleansing and purification through the association with Brigid. Often, Imbolc is mistakenly tied to Candlemas, but that Christian holiday originated in Greece in the fourth century and was adopted by the Roman Catholic Church in the seventh century.

The contemporary celebration is tied to cleansing and purification, physically and spiritually, and hope as nature, in the Northern Hemisphere, moves toward Spring and the renewed fertility of the Earth. We may not see plants budding out yet, but plants have begun to react to the increased daylight, as those who harvest sap from maple trees count on. Human celebrations also treat Imbolc as a festival of light, with good reason. We can see that the days are longer. For those who want details: daylight at Yule was 9 hours 8 minutes, and at Imbolc was 10 hours 5 minutes.

Last year at Imbolc, there was reason to wonder how one could celebrate a festival of hope and cleansing, of the metaphoric as well as physical return of light. We are still in a difficult place socially and politically, and dealing with the emotional and mental side effects of that turmoil, but we are visibly closer to the goal of restoring our political and social fabric as we can see daylight increasing, slowly but surely.

This doesn't mean that we can rest, but we can hold on to hope and use that as a foundation for the courage and resolve we need to continue.

On the other hand, we are in this for the long haul. As we will have more cold weather and snow, there will be continued assaults on our political life and social fabric. Keep in mind that whatever the weather, daylight is increasing; the Wheel is turning. The flame in Brigid's sanctuary in Ireland remained lit because it was always tended. We must tend our inner flame. Even the smallest action matters, as even a small flame counters darkness and can grow.

Transformation is the whole of the Wheel of the Year. Imbolc is a reminder that transformation is possible through persistence and that small changes, such as a few more minutes of daylight, can lead to larger actions. Take time to reflect. What can you do, who can you work with to make the changes you want to see take root and grow?

~ Leslie Peet

**2026  
Time & Talent  
Auction  
April 5 - 25**



To kick off our **2026 Time and Talent Auction, "LOOK UP! - Bloom Where You are Planted"**, I would like to tell a story about our Christmas amaryllis plant that fell under its own weight into a heap onto our kitchen floor. I swept the dirt and long stem up into compost, but rescued the four flowers and put them in a vase of water.

Several days later, they were still looking quite lovely, so I used them as a centerpiece for the work table for our auction committee meeting. During the meeting, it occurred to me that those flowers embodied our auction theme, "LOOK UP! - Bloom Where You are Planted".

A few days after that, a fifth flower blossomed! We continued to enjoy for more than two weeks.

So, if the weight of the wider world is making you feel like that heap on the kitchen floor, know that you, too, can re-blossom by helping to support Chalice House, our [three Service Partners](#), and CCUU.

Be watching your email for the next few weeks for information about how to donate your time or talent, and how to participate in the **Live Auction on Saturday, April 25 at 5:00 in Atherton Hall**, and the **Silent Auction, beginning online Sunday, April 5**.

*"LOOK UP!  
Do you see the sunlight?  
LOOK UP!  
There's flowers in your hair.  
Hold on!  
'Cause somebody loves you  
You know trouble's always gonna be there.  
Don't let it bring you to your knees.  
LOOK UP!"*

~ Joy Oladokun

~ Nancy Dempsey, on behalf of the Service Partner Fundraising Committee: Nancy Dempsey & Mari Van Meter, co-chairs; Debbie Lee and Margaret Myren, [partnerfundraising@ccuu.org](mailto:partnerfundraising@ccuu.org)



Worship descriptions are included below and are also on the church website: <https://ccuu.org/services/>

Join us Sunday mornings in the Sanctuary or online—<https://bit.ly/CCUUworshipSvc>

Join us Sunday evenings on the 2nd & 4th Sundays in Atherton Hall.

Religious Exploration classes for Children & Youth are held Sundays at 10 am.

### Feb 8 at 10 am Healthy Competition? Sr. High Youth Group

Come out to support the youth as they wrestle with all the ways we compete in the world and why.

This is an all-church service; young people attend worship with their family and do not have religious exploration classes.

### Feb 8 at 5 pm Tending the Spark: Sing the Body Electric with the Spark Band

Join us for a meditative journey through sound and spirit. In this experience, simple, repeating musical phrases open space for presence, grounding, and connection to the sacred. Together, we'll weave sound into a living meditation — a circle of joy, harmony, and embodied being.

This intentional gathering remembers the ancient ways of ancestors who circled and sang under the night sky. Come as you are, ready to rest, remember, and be renewed.

### Feb 15 at 10 am Embodied Activism Rev. Pam Rumancik

We're hearing the word 'somatic' everywhere these days. Soma, meaning body, meaning that we've been in our heads too long and need to reconnect to our whole selves. How does this relate to living out our values in the world? What might embodied activism mean?

Share the Plate: Half of the offering will be donated to [Journeys: The Road Home](#), a non-profit agency that provides shelter, social services, and housing to people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity in 37 towns in north/northwest suburban Cook County and southern Lake County Illinois.

### Feb 22 at 10 am A New Era of Action in Illinois Natasha Walker, pulpit guest

What happens when 30+ congregations speak with one moral voice? We are delighted to welcome Natasha Walker, our new leader at the UU Advocacy Network of Illinois (UUANI), to the pulpit. Natasha brings a unique perspective to our movement, combining two decades of strategic work in Corporate America with a deep commitment to the interconnected web of life. This morning, she shares her vision for UUANI's three-pronged strategy of advocacy, activism, and resistance. Come hear why our daily actions are "inextricably braided into everything else" and how your engagement can help shape the future of our state.

Our pulpit guest this Sunday is the new Executive Director of UU Advocacy Network of Illinois (UUANI). Her background in HR and global operations at Google and Disney, her experience at Black Lives of UU (BLUU) intersectional combined with her identity as a Black, single mother with neurodiverse children, gives her a unique perspective on UU social justice efforts.

### Feb 22 at 5 pm Tending the Spark



### Join the Choir!

**Thursdays, 7 pm**

Thursday rehearsals are held 7-9 pm. No audition needed, just come! We'll save a seat for you.

### Congregational Potlucks

Thank you the Justice Matters team for hosing our Jan 4 potluck.

**Upcoming potlucks—mark your calendars:**

- Mar 1: hosted by Transitions & Feminine Divine
- Apr 5: hosted by Green Sanctuary & Grounds Working Group
- May 3: *no host yet*

If your group would like to host in May, please sign up here: [https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/11QAcoAw5YVvCCTPfc5IWG\\_EaZoEmHAJA-vWoyDy8\\_Kk/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/11QAcoAw5YVvCCTPfc5IWG_EaZoEmHAJA-vWoyDy8_Kk/edit?usp=sharing)

What's involved in hosting? See this document: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1s6DG81QjYo-t6zM-xYf6Xm-ngCmRd6rx/view?usp=sharing>.



### Did you miss a Worship Service?

View them:

- on our website, <https://ccuu.org/past-services/> (just click on the service you'd like to view; if there's a video available, you'll see it on that service's page)
- on our YouTube channel, <https://bit.ly/CCUUyoutube>.

### Be the First Smile They See!

One of the most powerful ministries at CCUU happens before the worship service even begins. A warm smile at the door. A friendly "we're so glad you're here." A helping hand for someone who's new, uncertain, or just had a tough week.. Sign up online using the QR code or go to <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70a044ea4a72fa13-sunday2#/>.

For more info, contact Nancy Frenk. Thank you.





## Justice Matters

The Justice Matters Committee wants everyone to know about opportunities for participation in training, conferences, and events to attend. Please also take a few minutes to help create a better world

by following up on our recommended actions for the week. These suggested action items are not the official position of Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist. We share these action items to keep our congregation informed of events occurring in our local community and around the country that each individual may or may not wish to take action on. Any actions or views taken as a result of the Justice Matters Committee are the actions and views of each individual alone

- [CALL TO ACTION #1: Reign in DHS Spending](#) (Emails to your Senators, 10 Minutes)
- [CALL TO ACTION#2: Keep Boycotting](#) (Boycott)
- [BONUS: Use 5 Calls](#) (Phone Calls, As Long as You Want)

Please see the JUSTICE MATTERS calendar of events at <https://ccuu.org/service-ministry/>. If you use Google Calendar, there's a link at the bottom of the to subscribe to our JUSTICE MATTERS calendars for: Democracy Action, Immigration Action, LGBTQ Action, and/or Climate Action.

Want more information or to get involved in one of our Action Teams? Email [justicematters@ccuu.org](mailto:justicematters@ccuu.org)

## Monthly Fair Trade Sale

February 15

Please stop by our table in Atherton Hall after worship to purchase fairly-traded coffee, tea, chocolate, nuts, olive oil from Equal Exchange.

I've come back from the colorless world of despair by forcing myself to look hard, for a long time, at a single glorious thing: a flame of red geranium... I have taught myself joy, over and over again.

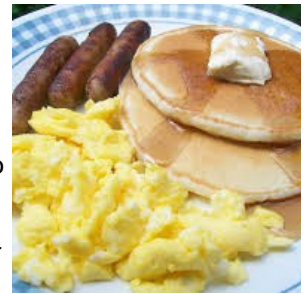
Barbara Kingsolver



## Help Provide Meal for PADS Shelter

Weds, Feb 18

The Journeys Center provides overnight shelter seven days per week. In partnership with St. John UCC in Arlington Heights, CCUU has committed to provide the evening meal once per month, on the 3rd Wednesday, at the Journeys Center. For February, we are going to serve "Breakfast for Dinner."



PADS guests are served a continental style breakfast in the morning. So many of us enjoy a tasty, hot breakfast, that we decided on this offbeat menu for a change of pace. In a change from earlier months, please deliver your contribution by 4 pm if possible. This will ensure we can fully heat the meal components for serving. The Journeys Center can accept our meal contributions beginning at 8:30 am, thus making the drop off process very flexible for us. They are located at roughly I-53 and NW Hwy. Just east of I-53 and on the north side of NW Hwy.

Please check out the [Sign-Up Genius sheet here](#) and sign up to contribute a portion of the meal on February 18, 2026. Additional details are provided on the sign-up sheet. Please contact Karen Epps with questions. Thank you so much for your support!

## Green News

**Free Webinar on Feb 18: From Wasteland to Wonder – Easy Ways We Can Help Heal Earth in the Sub/Urban Landscape**

Join Wild Ones on Weds, Feb 18, for a free webinar featuring master arborist and author of *From Wasteland to Wonder*, Basil Camu. He will explore practical, evidence-based ways to transform suburban and urban landscapes by working with trees, soil, and natural systems. You'll learn how shifting common landscape practices can help heal the Earth all while saving time and money by working with nature instead of against it. Register Today: <https://wildones.org/from-wasteland-to-wonder/>

**Rx Drug Bottle Reuse Program**

CCUU is partnering with Southminster Presbyterian Church to collect empty Rx bottles. The bottles will be cleaned and reused to serve low-income families, helping with Rx costs. **Bottles must be empty, with labels removed as well as possible, and with lids still attached.** There is a box in Atherton Hall for your bottles to be deposited. Questions? Contact a member of the Green Sanctuary Committee. *Thank you!*



## Stay Informed of UUA News

Subscribe to an email list: <https://www.uua.org/about/stay-in-touch>

**MidAmerica UUA Newsletter**

Subscribe here: <https://www.uua.org/midamerica/news>

## Young Adults (18-35ish)

**Game Night: Feb 1 & March 1, 6:30 pm**

Join the Young Adults group in Ather-ton Hall for game night on the first Sun-day evening of the month. Bring a game to share with others, or play one of ours.

**Spiritual Discussion Night: Feb 15, 6:30 pm**

We'll talk about a range of subjects that fall under the scope of being human - morality, ethics, life, death, spirit-uality, and whatever else speaks to us in the moment. Come with an open heart and mind and any discussion topics you may wish to pose to the group! We will hold our Spiritual Discussions on the 3rd Sunday of even-numbered months.

**Show & Tell Night: Feb 22, 6:30 pm**

We will meet in room 6 for a Show & Tell Night. Bring an item that is very important to you and share why it means so much. If you are not comfortable speaking pub-licly, feel free to come and observe as a means to better get to know the other members of the group.

**What is Your Job? Night: March 8, 6:30 pm**

We will meet in Room 1 in the RE Wing. Everyone will have the option to give a short presentation (PowerPoints appreciated but not required) on what they do for work. Even if you don't present, still come and en-joy the opportunity to learn a little more about your fellow young adults and how they spend their time!



## Atheist, Humanist, Agnostic Online Discussion

**2nd Tuesdays—Feb 10 at 7 pm**

This month, Paul Whittington will be present on "What is consciousness? How does it affect your per-ception of self? Can AI ever become conscious?"

We will meet on Zoom; use meeting ID: 975 1200 6347 and passcode: 1025.



## Open Forum Discussion

**Sundays, 9 am—In person or Online**

In the Open Forum, we agree to discuss the issues of the day honestly and respectfully, welcoming the diversity of views that may be expressed on any given topic. All are welcome to join us in classroom 2 or on zoom; meeting id 974 5981 3107 and passcode 1025.

## Earth Rhythms Drum Circle

**Fri, Apr 17, 7-8:30 pm**



This is an inclusive organic gathering where participants are empowered by the creation of rhythms, dancing, cele-bration and community. No musical background is needed, only the desire to have fun. All are welcome. For more

info, contact Nancy Frenk or Cindy Thornton.

## Earth Rhythms Sound Journey

**Fri, March 13, 7-8 pm**



Join Nancy Frenk & Cindy Thornton in the Sanctuary for a sound journey as we meditate with the gentle frequencies of crystal singing bowls, chimes and addi-tional calming instruments. These ses-sions provide relaxation, restore mind-

fulness, and promote overall wellbeing in a tranquil envi-ronment. Participants are encouraged to bring a yoga mat or sit/recline on sanctuary chairs. No registration is re-quired for participation. A suggested donation of \$20 is encouraged with a portion being donated to CCUU.



GREEN  
SANCTUARY

## Green Sanctuary Meeting

**2nd Sundays—Feb 8, 11:30 am**

All are welcome to join us for our monthly meetings.

*The Green Sanctuary Committee encour-ages awareness, appreciation and action in support of the environment on which we all depend. We promote worship that deepens our connection to the natural world, educational programs for all ages, and service projects that benefit our local area and beyond.*

## Buddhist Study Group

**2nd Sundays—Feb 8, 11:30 am**



We read selected Buddhist texts, discuss them, and try to apply the principles and techniques to our everyday lives. All are welcome! Note: in March, we will meet on March 29. For more info, contact Melanie Terbovic.



## Transitions

**Feb 26, 10 am**

Please join us in Atherton Hall this month when Ellen & Pete Vinzani will present *Tombs & Temples: Our Visit to Egypt*. As usual enjoy the camara-derie of our pre-program coffee time, and, our post-program potluck lunch. Ellen & Pete are bringing koshari, the Egyptian national dish. Ellen suggests you perhaps continue the Egyptian theme by bringing falafel, hummus, and pita bread or whatever; it need not be totally Egyptian themed.



## Feminine Divine Women's Group

**Last Saturdays—Feb 28, 10 am**

New women are always welcome. Join us the last Saturday of the month in classroom 6. For more info, contact Barbara Griggs.

## Learn more about being part of the CCUU Community



### *Intro to CCUU: Feb 1, 11 am*

Newcomers are invited to attend this brief orientation to Countryside Church and Unitarian Universalism which is offered the first Sunday of each month and hosted by a longtime CCUU member and lifelong UU.

### *Path to Belonging: March 22 & 29*

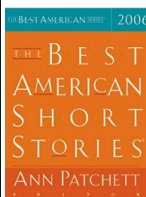
This two-class series is an opportunity to learn more about Countryside Church UU and more about the meaning of membership; it is also an opportunity to get to know others who are new to CCUU. Our minister, staff, and lay leaders provide exercises and opportunities to explore what you are seeking and to discover the freedom and diversity of our faith. Register here: <https://ccuu.org/path-to-belonging/>



## Daytime Book Group for Fiction Lovers

*1st Wednesdays at 1 pm*

All are welcome to join us in the Stokes Room to discuss *The Lager Queen of Minnesota* by J. Ryan Stradal.



## Reading Roundtable

*2nd & 4th Weds—Feb 11 & 25 at 10 am*

Join us to discuss selections from *2006 Best American Short Stories* edited by Ann Patchett. All are welcome! For more info, contact Barbara Griggs.



## Last Mondays Book Discussion

*Feb 23 at 7:00 pm*

All are welcome to join us in the Stokes Room to discuss *The Bear and the Nightingale* by Katherine Arden.

## Book Circle

*March 1 at 6:15 pm*

Join us March 1 to discuss *What If We Get It Right? Visions of Climate Futures* by Ayana Johnson. In addition to sections written by the author, the book includes the author's interviews with about 20 climate activists and thinkers, as well as poems and art from a number of other contributors.

We will gather in classroom 2 at 6:15 and begin discussion at 6:30. Newcomers are always welcome!



## Online Journaling Circle

*Feb 5, 10 am*

Each gathering opens with a short meditation. We then free write and write from prompts related to our monthly themes. Have your notebook or journal ready & join us online for personal exploration and growth. For more info, contact Juli Cicarelli.

## Haiku Garden Online Workshop

*Feb 12, 10 am*

Want to write haiku for our garden? All are welcome to join us on the 2nd Thursday of the month to learn & work on modern Haiku for the church's seasonal Haiku garden.

We meet on zoom. Go to [www.zoom.us](http://www.zoom.us) and use meeting id 947 7524 4603 and passcode 262695..



**winter winds  
through the willows  
ancestors whispering**

~ Cathy Lieblang

## UU Men's Retreat Weekend

*March 6-8 at St.*

*Mary's/Baraga Retreat Center*

The Men's Retreat Committee offers events which promote meaningful discussions and thoughtful dialog among men. For more info & to register, email [mensretreat@unitytemple.org](mailto:mensretreat@unitytemple.org).



## A UU Retreat in the Adirondacks

Silver Bay YMCA on Lake George, in upstate New York, is spectacularly beautiful and they host an annual UU weekend which is equally spectacular, with activities for all ages. This year it will be Oct 9-11 or 12, if you stay the 3rd night. Contact Ellen Vinzani for further details. Although it's not until October, rooms are filling fast. Last year Ellen Vinzani, Linda Kuna, Judy Ball, and duRee Bryant went! More info and register here: <https://albanyuu.org/blog/uu-silver-bay-weekend/>

## Bayside UU Family Camp

Looking for a great summer experience? Join us at Bayside UU Family Camp held at Wesley Woods Conference Center on the shores of Geneva Lake in Williams Bay, WI. This year, camp will take place June 28 - July 4. This special week includes adult workshops, activities for children, free time for family fun and relaxation, and inter-generational activities. For more information visit our website at [baysideuu.org](http://baysideuu.org) or contact [baysideuu@gmail.com](mailto:baysideuu@gmail.com).

## Embodying Resilience

When did we decide that resilience was a solo project?

It's not that we consciously chose to define it that way. It's just what we were taught, from the time we were little right up to today: "Pull yourself up by your own bootstraps"; "You're stronger than you think."; "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again."; "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger." The cultural consensus is clear: resilience depends on your personal toughness and inner strength. It's a solo act!

But other voices are on the rise. Take author and activist, Soraya Chemaly, who writes,

"In spectacular arrogance, our mainstream vision of resilience encourages us to ignore, minimize, and even punish the desire for our greatest resilience assets: interdependence, collective versatility, and shared care. Instead of revealing our relationships to one another, our environments, and the systems we live in, this vision highlights and glorifies self-sufficiency, limitless positivity, and individual strength against all odds. It makes us less resilient, not more."

In a world facing numerous threats [of collapse and conflict](#), Chemaly's words help us see that correctly defining resilience is not just an intellectual exercise, but a matter of life and death. We all sense it: the road ahead for us human beings is going to get rough. So we simply can't afford to overlook a single source of resilience.

Which is another way of saying the world needs us to start speaking up too! If those rough roads ahead are to be successfully navigated, we need people who challenge those old-school chants of "You can do it!" with a new mantra of "We can't do it on our own!"

That doesn't mean we have to abandon old messages about personal resilience entirely, but it does mean that we need to get better at noticing when they get in our way. It's fine to celebrate the classic resilient image of a tree flexibly leaning and bending with the wind, but we can't let that distract us from the fact that, today, the kind of leaning that matters most is leaning on each other.

It's all one big reminder that while resilience has a lot to do with what is inside us, it is even more dependent on what is between us. We survive our wounds and weaknesses by having the strength to tell others about it. We find the courage to make our way through the dark only when we sense we are not alone. Internal and individual grit only gets us so far; empathy, assurance and love from others gets us the rest of the way. Boil it all down and you get this: There really is no such thing as a resilient person; there are only resilient relationships from which resilient people arise.

So friends, this month, let's look around as much as look within. Let's let up on all the "grin and bear it" talk and instead grab the hand that is reaching our way.

## Questions for Embodying Resilience

*This list of questions is an aid for deep reflection. How you answer them is often less important than the journey they take you on. So, read through the list of questions 2-3 times until **one question** sticks out for you and captures your attention, or as some faith traditions say, until one of the questions "shimmers." Or as we like to say, "Read over them until one of the questions **picks you**." Once you've identified it, go deeper by asking yourself:*

- *What might my inner wisdom be trying to say to me through this question?*
  - *How might this question be trying to wake me up or get me to realize something through this question?*
1. When do you remember first witnessing one or both of your parents act resiliently? How might that memory have a message for you today?
  2. Has someone else's resilience ever helped you survive? When did you not give up because they didn't give up?
  3. How has your life partner made you more resilient?
  4. What is your most [beautiful scar](#)? What wound ended up giving you a surprising gift?
  5. Have you been trying to act strong for far too long?
  6. What if resilience is not about holding tight against the wind, but letting go and trusting the wind to take you where you need to go next?
  7. Who are you [without your wound](#)?
  8. Might your resilience be found by releasing yourself from the role [your family system has stuck you in](#)?
  9. If saving the world seems no longer within reach, how might creating [islands of sanity](#) be your road back to hope?
  10. What parts of you did you have to hide to survive? What would it look like to invite them back into the world?
  11. Why do you keep pushing through when you could save yourself by [courageously quitting](#)?
  12. What if you allowed yourself to be [a work in progress](#)?
  13. What if the biggest secret to resilience is [loving it all](#)?

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## Monthly Theme Inspiration & Exploration

We explore the monthly themes during worship & RE, through our narthex table display, in CCUU's Journaling Circle and Soul Matters small groups.

Find musical inspiration on each theme:

- Spotify: <https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/spotify-lists.html>
- YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCL\\_fSD0\\_Ps01IGauCvL\\_mKQ/playlists](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCL_fSD0_Ps01IGauCvL_mKQ/playlists)

# Upcoming Church Events

February 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p><b>*REMINDER*</b> - This calendar does not reflect outside groups' use of CCUU space. To avoid conflicts, please schedule all events with the church office – email <a href="mailto:ccuu@ccuu.org">ccuu@ccuu.org</a> or call 847-359-8440 x 1</p>			<p><b>Feb 4</b> <i>Focus publication</i> <b>10am</b> Telling Our Stories  <b>1pm</b> 1<sup>st</sup> Weds Book Group</p>	<p><b>Feb 5</b> <b>10am</b> online Journaling Circle  <b>5:45pm</b> Tai Chi <b>7pm</b> Choir</p>	<p><b>Feb 6</b></p>	<p><b>Feb 7</b> Wellness House Offerings  <b>10:30</b> Tai Chi</p>
<p><b>Feb 8</b> <b>9 am</b> Open Forum Discussion <b>10 am</b> Worship &amp; RE <b>11am</b> SUUPer Bowl <b>11:30am</b> Green Sanctuary Mtg <b>11:30am</b> Buddhist Study Group <b>11:30am</b> Building the World We Dream About <b>5pm</b> Tending the Spark</p>	<p><b>Feb 9</b></p>	<p><b>Feb 10</b>  <b>7pm</b> AHA Discussion</p>	<p><b>Feb 11</b>  <b>10am</b> Reading Roundtable</p>	<p><b>Feb 12</b> <b>10am</b> Haiku Garden Workshop <b>5:45pm</b> Tai Chi <b>7pm</b> Choir</p>	<p><b>Feb 13</b>  <b>7pm</b> My Improv Buddies</p>	<p><b>Feb 14</b> <b>10:30</b> Tai Chi</p>
<p><b>Feb 15</b> <b>9 am</b> Open Forum Discussion <b>10am</b> Worship &amp; RE <b>11am</b> Fellowship &amp; Fair Trade <b>11:30am</b> Shared Pulpit Worship Class <b>6:30pm</b> Young Adult Spiritual Discussion Night</p>	<p><b>16</b></p>	<p><b>17</b></p>	<p><b>18</b> <b>PADS Meal</b>  <b>10am</b> Living Well  <b>7pm</b> Board of Trustees meeting</p>	<p><b>19</b>  <b>5:45pm</b> Tai Chi <b>7pm</b> Choir</p>	<p><b>20</b></p>	<p><b>21</b> <b>10:30</b> Tai Chi</p>
<p><b>Feb 22</b> <b>9 am</b> Open Forum Discussion <b>10am</b> Worship Service &amp; RE <b>11am</b> Fellowship <b>11:30am</b> Shared Pulpit Worship Class <b>5pm</b> Tending the Spark <b>6:30pm</b> YA Show &amp; Tell Night</p>	<p><b>23</b>  <b>7pm</b> Last Mondays Book Discussion</p>	<p><b>24</b></p>	<p><b>25</b> <i>Focus deadline</i>  <b>10am</b> Reading Roundtable</p>	<p><b>26</b> <b>10am</b> Transitions  <b>7pm</b> Choir</p>	<p><b>27</b></p>	<p><b>28</b> <b>10am</b> Fem. Divine Women's Group</p>
<p><b>March 1</b> <b>9 am</b> Open Forum Discussion <b>10am</b> Worship Service &amp; RE <b>11am</b> Congregational Potluck <b>6:15pm</b> Book Circle <b>6:30pm</b> Young Adult Game Night</p>	<p><b>Mar 2</b></p>	<p><b>Mar 3</b></p>	<p><b>Mar 4</b> <i>Focus publication</i> <b>10am</b> Telling Our Stories  <b>1pm</b> 1<sup>st</sup> Weds Book Group</p>	<p><b>Mar 5</b> <b>10am</b> online Journaling Circle  <b>7pm</b> Choir</p>	<p><b>Mar 6</b></p>	<p><b>Mar 7</b> Wellness House Offerings <b>10am</b> Elevator Speech Class</p>
<p><b>March 8</b> <b>9 am</b> Open Forum Discussion <b>10 am</b> Worship &amp; RE <b>11:30am</b> Green Sanctuary Mtg <b>5pm</b> Tending the Spark <b>6:30pm</b> Young Adult 'What is your job?' Night</p>	<p><b>Mar 9</b></p>	<p><b>Mar 10</b>  <b>7pm</b> AHA Discussion</p>	<p><b>Mar 11</b>  <b>10am</b> Reading Roundtable</p>	<p><b>Mar 12</b> <b>10am</b> Haiku Garden Workshop <b>5:45pm</b> Tai Chi <b>7pm</b> Choir</p>	<p><b>Mar 13</b></p>	<p><b>Mar 14</b> <b>10:30</b> Tai Chi</p>

## My Improv Buddies at CCUU

*Fri, Feb 13*

**doors open at 7, show at 7:30**

Come laugh with us at this family-friendly improv show in Atherton Hall.



## Wellness House Offerings at CCUU

*Hypnosis Group & Reiki Sessions*

Held at CCUU the 1st Saturday of the month, these offerings are open to anyone in our area who has or had cancer of any kind. *Free, registration is required*; email [jchipman@wellnesshouse.org](mailto:jchipman@wellnesshouse.org) or call 630-654-5116

# focus

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Co-Ministers	Rev. Pam Rumancik RevPam@ccuu.org Rev. Karen Mooney RevKaren@ccuu.org
Community Minister	Rev. Dr. C. Scot Giles
Director Relig. Exploration	Rev. Karen Mooney RevKaren@ccuu.org
Volunteer Coord. Faith Dev. for Youth & Adults	Susan Auld & Pat Wydell AFD@ccuu.org
Music Director	Alison Vernon Music.Director@ccuu.org
Congregational Administrator	Laurie Lantz ccuu@ccuu.org
Technology Coordinator	Luis Diaz Tech-Coord@ccuu.org
Volunteer Grounds Coord. Volunteer Kitchen Staff	Siri Laurin David Williams

### Lay Ministers

Ellen Vinzani, Coordinator

Lisa Christensen	Helen Moore	Joy Simon
Barbara Griggs	Becky Serpe	Chris Smith
Mary Johnson		

For assistance from Lay or Care Ministry, please contact Ellen Vinzani or Rev. Pam.

## Our Covenant

We unite to strengthen the bonds of kinship among all persons, to promote human dignity, and to increase reverence for life's creating, sustaining, and transforming power through worship, study, and service.

## Our Mission

In pursuit of Beloved Community, we welcome ALL to Create Belonging, Inspire Curiosity, Heal our World.

## Our Vision

We envision a Beloved Community that is a dynamic community, ever widening the circle to be inclusive of everyone and where diversity can flourish. We envision and realize an interdependent relationship of love and mutual respect for each other and our environment, and a place where we can also learn from each other while we honor an all-encompassing free and responsible search for meaning and truth in this world.

## Upcoming Focus Deadlines

Submit all articles to [ccuu@ccuu.org](mailto:ccuu@ccuu.org)

- February 25 (publ. March 4)
- March 25 (publ. April 1)

Between *Focus* issues, see announcements in the E-News on Wednesdays. Deadline for e-updates is Weds at 9 am.

Return Service Requested  
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