

Stewardship Campaign

Rooted in Love, Growing Our Future



Our annual stewardship campaign - or pledge drive - for the 2026-27 fiscal year is underway. Thank you to those who have already submitted a pledge form. **If you have not yet done so, please [submit one](#) by March 15.** See the [email that went out on Feb 17](#) for details.

Cottage Meetings: March 8 & 15

The Stewardship Team will hold cottage meetings to explain our budget goals and why your pledge is important to sustaining our church

community. Join the Board President and Treasurer in the Sanctuary following the worship service; *if you are attending worship on zoom, just stay in the worship meeting.*

Please bring your pledge materials with you when you come; pledge packets are available at church if you have misplaced yours.

Take a Congregational Survey

The Minister Search Team has developed [this survey](#) to help us, and our future minister, understand our congregation. Responses to these questions will help guide the search team as we interview and evaluate ministry applicants. We estimate the survey will take about 10 minutes to complete. Your responses will be anonymous to all. You are free to skip any question you prefer not to answer. *Please take a few minutes to [complete the survey](#) by March 11. Paper surveys are available at church.* Thank you!

~ The 2026 Contract Minister Search Team: Pat Wydell, Judy Ball, Michael Lunter, Elizabeth Van Orden, Amy Zukoski

UU Elevator Speech Class

March 7 and 14; 10–11:30 am



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 1.5-hour class that meets 2 consecutive Saturdays, 10-11:30 am. Excellent for

newer UUs, and also good for longer-term members who would like to fine-tune their explanations. Interactive participation will encourage confidence in responding to curiosity and questions. *Facilitator: Denise Sepos*

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

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From Our Minister

Potato, Egg, and Coffee

I find myself thinking a lot about the meaning of life recently. The ‘why are we here?, Is there a point? What is mine to do?’ kinds of questions. I’ve also been flashing back to my much younger self – maybe five or six years old. I have vivid memories of sitting on my tricycle in the backyard, gazing at the vastness of a blue sky and wondering what this was all about.



Maybe it’s part and parcel of growing older. Maybe after leaving behind the ‘right’ answers that got us through the busyness of the middle years, we have time to ponder again. To pay attention and to simply wonder. So, I am.

I recently found a children’s story titled **Potato, Egg & Coffee**. It’s a sweet tale of a daughter experiencing hardship and her father putting three pots on to boil. He places a potato in one, an egg in the second, and a scoop of coffee in the third. After letting all three simmer, he invites his daughter to tell him what she notices. The potato, which started out firm, was now soft and malleable. The egg which went in liquid, became firm. The coffee had transformed the water into a rich beverage. Her father explained that the boiling water was the adversity we all face. We each bring different qualities to the water and respond in our own way. We can collapse. We can become hardened. Or we can transform the world around us by bringing our own special flavor.

Of course, humans are more nuanced than pantry items. We have the ability to choose whether we are going to let life’s challenges change us, or if we are going to make a difference in the world around us. Everyone has a natural tendency, but we can consciously make a decision to bring love to the people around us rather than surrendering (becoming mush) or hardening (acting from fear.) If we are present to ourselves and to what is happening, we can become agents of change simply by sharing the best of who we are.

As I experience my sixty-fifth year, I find myself going back again and again to the poem, [Kindness](#), by Naomi Shihab Nye. She writes:

*Then it is only kindness that makes sense anymore,
only kindness that ties your shoes
and sends you out into the day to gaze at bread,
only kindness that raises its head
from the crowd of the world to say
It is I you have been looking for,
and then goes with you everywhere
like a shadow or a friend.*

Kindness. Maybe that’s the flavor we have the ability to bring no matter how vigorously we’re being boiled by life. I don’t know. But it’s what makes sense today.

~ Rev Pam

From Lay Ministry Team

Let the Lay Pastoral Ministry Team know your joys, concerns, and gritudes: <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.

Board of Trustees Meetings

3rd Weds—March 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.

Tending the Spark: An Evening Gathering

March 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 March 8, join us for Engaging Your Full Self: Simple Movement. Mari Van Meter will lead a gentle, restorative time of movement and connection. With simple guidance and music to follow, you’ll be invited to engage your whole self - body, mind, and spirit.

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

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



Donations needed by March 15!

The March 15 donation deadline is approaching quickly, so we hope you've been thinking about what time and talent you can contribute to this year's Time and Talent Auction, "[LOOK UP! Bloom Where You Are Planted](#)"!

Looking to donate? It's super easy! Just fill out this [online donation form](#) and we'll take it from there! Wondering what to donate? Click [here](#) for inspiration!

We will be available at the Time & Talent table in Atherton Hall after the service on Sundays to answer any questions and to share donation ideas.

Key Dates:

- February 16 - March 15: Use the [online donation form](#) to submit your auction contributions
- March 14 - April 22: Watch enews to sign up on "Signup Genius" for a one hour slot to help with the Live Auction Event on April 25
- April 1: Online auction is open for browsing at 32auctions.com/CCUU2026
- April 4 at 12PM: Online auction is live! Let the bidding begin!
- April 15: RSVP deadline for registering for the April 25 in-person event - invitations arrive in the mail (USPS) in March
- April 25 (reservation required): Doors open for in-person auction/dinner party at 5:00 PM in Atherton Hall; Online Auction closes at 6:30 PM; Live Auction begins at 7:15 PM.. Enjoy a great dinner; meet and greet our Service Partners, battle your fellow Country-siders in a lively auction with our very own CCUU auctioneers, Matt and Margaret Myren, and delight in storytelling by Red Hott Annie, and dance tunes by the CCUU "Peace River Band".
- Today until April 25: Watch enews for all the up-to-date info that you will need to know about this fabulous event!

"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

Still have questions? Feel free to contact:

The Service Partners Fundraising Committee: Nancy Dempsey & Mari Van Meter, co-chairs; Debbie Lee and Margaret Myren.

partnerfundraising@ccuu.org

Passover Seder

Friday, April 10, 6 pm

Calling all ages!

Please join us for an evening of meaningful ritual and learning, as we celebrate the Jewish Passover Seder. Bring the whole family and friends.

Register and pay during coffee

hour through April 5 or online: [https://](https://ccuu.breezechms.com/form/Seder)

ccuu.breezechms.com/form/Seder. Suggested Donations: Children under 12: \$5; Individuals: \$15; Families: max \$35.

- Seder essentials including wine, soup, and roasted chicken will be served.
- Please bring a vegetable, salad, side dish, or dessert to share. All dishes should comply with Passover traditions (i.e. no dairy, flour products, yeasts, bread, etc.).

What is a Passover Seder?

It's a ritual banquet which includes a retelling of the Exodus. *Seder* refers to the order of the ritual. *Passover* refers to the night that the angels of death passed over Jewish homes just before the Israelites won their freedom, fled after parting the Red Sea, and escaped from Egypt. The evening service includes wine (or grape juice) and special foods. There are readings in English and Hebrew and we even sing songs. Once the 'service' portion is over, a meal is shared by those attending and then another short service follows to end the Seder. While the Seder takes a while, it is a family-friendly event and is most often conducted in homes with children taking part in the reading or sharing of the story.

Why do Unitarian Universalists celebrate the Passover Seder?

As UUs, we recognize, respect, and turn for wisdom to the traditions of other religions – like Christmas and Ramadan. In this case, we are celebrating a sacred Jewish tradition. The main messages of the traditional Jewish Passover Seder are freedom and gratitude. We focus on these messages in our version of the Seder while retaining much of the traditions.

What will it be like?

You'll arrive by 6pm and bring a dish to share. That dish should meet general Seder guidelines – no pork, dairy, bread, or yeast. We'll then begin our service by following a book called the Haggadah which tells the story of the escape from Egypt. The word *Haggadah* means *the telling*. Since we will not eat for about an hour, you might give your kids a snack beforehand (though being hungry is part of the tradition for many folks). Coloring pages will be available to help occupy the children. Later we'll serve matzo ball soup and share a meal. Baked chicken will be served as a main dish. You are asked to bring a side dish or dessert to complete the meal. Once the meal is over, we'll have a brief service to complete the Seder. There will be the exciting search for the *Afikomen*.



Questions? Contact Linda Berry

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.

March 8 at 10 am What Kind of Love is at the Center? Rev. Pam Rumancik

The new logo for our faith puts love at the center, but what might it leave behind? Forgiveness, Humility, Compassion, Grace? Being a UU means defining our own terms and remembering the fullness of being human

March 8 at 5 pm Tending the Spark: Engaging Your Full Self: Simple Movement

Join us as Mari Van Meter leads a gentle, restorative time of movement and connection. With simple guidance and music to follow, you'll be invited to engage your whole self - body, mind, and spirit. *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.*

March 15 at 10 am Spiritual Journeys Service

Spiritual Journeys services are offered periodically, during which church members will share stories of their faith journey. This Sunday, Adam and Michael Lunter and Jeanmarie Dwyer-Wrigley will share their spiritual journeys.

Share the Plate: We will share the offering with the UU Service Committee, uusc.org.

March 22 at 10 am Here Comes the Sun Rev. Pam Rumanick & the Choir

Join us for our third musical celebration of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*.

Share the Plate: We will share the offering with the Association of UU Music Ministries (AUUMM).

March 22 at 5 pm Tending the Spark

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.

March 29 at 10 am Soul and Spirit, Body and Breath Dr. Mary Lamb Shelden

This service will look at grounding our spirituality in embodied practice. The service will be led by Dr. Mary Lamb Shelden, who is a lifelong, second-generation UU, a writer, a certified religious educator, a skilled facilitator and consultant, and a credentialed spiritual director, certified and commissioned by Meadville Lombard Theological School. She is also a former director of religious education here at Countryside.

April 5 at 10 am Easter Sunday: All on a Rising Day Rev. Pam Rumancik

Congregational Potlucks

Thank you to Transitions & Feminine Divine groups for hosting the March 1 potluck!

Upcoming potlucks—mark your calendars:

- Apr 19: hosted by Green Sanctuary & Grounds Working Group
- May potluck cancelled
- June 14: (after Pam & Karen's last worship service)

If your group would like to help in June, please sign up here: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/11QAcoAw5YVvCCTPfc5IWG_EaZoEmHAJA-yWoyDy8_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.



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.

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 or call 630-654-5116



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: CALL TO DEFUND ICE!](#) (Phone Calls or Emails, 5 - 10 Minutes per call)
- [CALL TO ACTION #2: STOP THE UNAUTHORIZED MILITARY STRIKES ON IRAN](#) (Phone Calls or Emails, 5 Minutes per call)
- [CALL TO ACTION #3: STOP DEPORTATION AIR-LINES](#) (Email, 1 Minute)
- [CALL TO ACTION #4 MAKE POSTERS FOR NO KINGS RALLY on MARCH 27](#) (Poster Making Party, 1-2 hours)
- [BONUS: ARE YOU A SUPER CALLER?](#) (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

Monthly Fair Trade Sale

March 22

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

Vegetable Garden Plots Available

Do you want to be a CCUU vegetable gardener? The Green Sanctuary Committee has organic vegetable garden plots available. No experience is necessary -- you only need a commitment to maintaining your plot through the season and the desire to grow and share delicious vegetables. Much of the produce we grow is donated to the Palatine Food Pantry. Contact Mike Calwas (gardens@ccuu.org)



Help Provide Meal for PADS Shelter

Weds, March 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 March, we are going to serve a Mexican food themed meal. You are welcome to use your favorite recipe for components of the meal or we will provide a recipe if you prefer. Please note that some guests request meatless options thus there are separate signup slots for some vegetable-based meal components.



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 March 18. Additional details are provided on the sign-up sheet. Please contact Karen Epps with questions. Thank you so much for your support!

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. A Creation Care Team Member from Southminster Presbyterian Church will pick up our donations, so it's an easy way for us to help out, both for our neighbors and for our environment.



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!*

Tai Chi

Saturdays, 10:30-11:30 am

NOTE: NO Tai Chi on March 7

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



Young Adults (18-35ish)

**Game Night: 1st Sundays—
March 1, & April 5 6:30 pm**

Join the Young Adults group in Atherton Hall for game night on the first Sunday evening of the month. Bring a game to share with others, or play one of ours.

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

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 enjoy the opportunity to learn a little more about your fellow young adults and how they spend their time! We will meet in classroom 1.

Business Meeting: March 15, 6:30 pm

Young adults (18-35) are invited to join us in classroom 6 for this monthly session. We discuss various matters or plan things to do.

Tier Ranking Night: March 22, 6:30 pm

Come enjoy a night of lively discussion as we arbitrarily assign ranks to things in a variety of categories! We will meet in classroom 6.



Atheist, Humanist, Agnostic Online Discussion

2nd Tuesdays—March 10 at 7 pm

This month, Jim Peterson will present on the book "The Separation of Church and Hate. A sane person's guide to taking back the Bible from fundamental fascists and flock fleeing frauds" by John Fugelsang. Jim has a video by Fugelsang regarding his book. There will be commentary prior to the video and discussion following the video.

We will meet in person at church in classroom 6.



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 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 additional calming instruments. These sessions provide relaxation, restore mindfulness, and promote overall wellbeing in a tranquil environment. Participants are encouraged to bring a yoga mat or sit/recline on sanctuary chairs. No registration is required for participation. A suggested donation of \$20 is encouraged with a portion being donated to CCUU.



Green Sanctuary Meeting

2nd Sundays—Mar. 8, 11:30 am

All are welcome to join us for our monthly meetings.

The Green Sanctuary Committee encourages 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.

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, celebration 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.

Buddhist Study Group

2nd Sundays—March 29, 11:30 am



vic.

Note: in March, we are meeting on March 29. We'll return to 2nd Sundays in April.

We read selected Buddhist texts, discuss them, and try to apply the principles and techniques to our everyday lives. All are welcome! For more info, contact Melanie Terbo-



Feminine Divine Women's Group

Last Saturdays—March 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.



Transitions

March 26, 10 am

Please join us in Atherton Hall this month, when Barb Griggs will present on the groundbreaking American photographer, Diane Arbus - known for her stark and empathetic portraits of people living at the edges of mainstream society. Her Ideas challenged conventional concepts of beauty and normalcy and her distinctive style and unrelenting curiosity reshaped portrait photography. As usual also enjoy our pre-program coffee time and the camaraderie of our post-program potluck lunch.

Learn more about being part of the CCUU Community



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/>

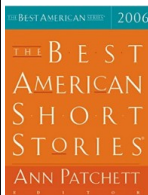


Daytime Book Group for Fiction Lovers

1st Wednesdays at 1 pm

All are welcome to join us in the Stokes Room for our discussions:

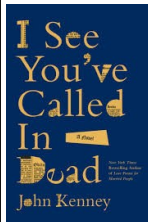
- March 4: *Glorious Exploits* by Ferdia Lennon
- April 1: *Theo of Golden* by Allen Levi. "a beautifully crafted fictional story about the power of generosity, the importance of wonder to a purposeful life, and the far-reaching possibilities of anonymous kindness. The novel has been described as a transformative read, leaving readers inspired to be more generous and appreciative of simple wonders."



Reading Roundtable

2nd & 4th Weds—March 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

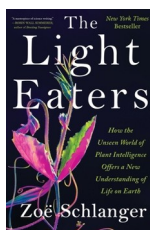
March 30 at 7:00 pm

All are welcome to join us in the Stokes Room to discuss *I See You've Called In Dead* by John Kenney.

Book Circle

March 1 & April 19 at 6:15 pm

- March 1: *What If We Get It Right? Visions of Climate Futures* by Ayana Johnson
- April 19: *The Light Eaters – How the Unseen World of Plant Intelligence Offers a New Understanding of Life on Earth* by Zoë Schlanger



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



Online Journaling Circle

March 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

March 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 and use meeting id 947 7524 4603 and passcode 262695.



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.



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 or contact baysideuu@gmail.com.

Alice Walker famously wrote, "I think it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it."

Walker's words are a beautiful reminder that attention and gratitude go hand in hand. Indeed they are a perfect embodiment of the dominant understanding of attention: that it's here to wake us up to life's many gifts.

But dig a little deeper and you discover that attention has a few additional and ulterior motives up its sleeve. So, friends, we want to give fair warning right here at the start. We want you to be ready for all that attention has in store for you. You see, the truth is, attention won't just make you grateful, it will make you fall in love. And it won't just enable you to notice life's gifts, it also will make it impossible to ignore life's pain.

So, first, the part about falling in love.

Mary Oliver wrote, "Attention is the beginning of devotion." It's an essential reminder that we cannot love someone or something that we do not fully see. Glances and self-interested attention never get to the real person or thing. They keep us on the surface of things and treat the other as a mirror. What we fall in love with, in such cases, is what we want from them and how we want them to make us feel. Which means that all we've really done is fall in love with ourselves and our own longings.

Attention wants more for us than this. It wants us to learn that truly loving someone or something requires the difficult work of noticing our wants and then putting them down. This kind of love asks us to look without expectation of who or what we hope the other will be, an act that mystic and philosopher, Simone Weil, calls self-emptying. It's a type of looking that keeps on looking until we discover something entirely new, entirely other, entirely unique. And once we notice that stunning uniqueness, we're in trouble, because it will completely reshuffle our desires and devotions. It will knock us to our knees. Nothing will seem as important or precious as the particularity of the other. We will want nothing more than to ensure that the other feels seen. And we will come to know this as love.

Now, what about attention and pain? What does attention want from us in this regard?

Well, this time it's a UU minister, Rev. Sean Denison, that best guides us on our way. Rev. Sean writes "The ability to see beauty is the beginning of our moral sensibility. What we believe is beautiful we will not wantonly destroy." In other words, seeing the beauty of something comes with a commitment. You don't just think to yourself "Oh, that's pretty," you think "My God, I must protect it." Its survival becomes your survival. Its pain becomes your pain.

All of which is to say, yes, you can expect to leave this month feeling grateful, but you should also be prepared to feel altered. To understand attention as a doorway into love and pain, is to understand that the work of attention is not just about realizing all we've been given; It's also a reminder that to look, to really look, is to risk being re-ordered. And made larger, as devotion to others and the pain of others displace the smallness of love of self.

And maybe in the end, that's what we should be most grateful for: the way looking, almost always, leaves us larger.

Questions for Paying Attention

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. As a child, which of your senses was your favorite way of paying attention to the world?
 2. When growing up, what one or two things, above all others, did your family communicate were worthy of attention? Beauty? Duty? Kindness? Humility? Honesty? Reputation? Education? Loyalty? Success? God?
 3. When was the last time paying attention left you astonished? What would it mean to have more of these moments in your life?
 4. Would you be pleased if your gravestone read: "She attended well to a few worthy things"?
 5. Do you need to stop beating yourself up for avoiding paying attention to an overwhelming or painful part of your life?
 6. Is it time to finally pay attention to that overwhelming or painful thing you've been avoiding?
 7. Are you wasting your attention and energy on people who take you for granted?
 8. Wise ones tell us that we become what we give our attention to. What has more of your attention - and more of you - than you want?
 9. As you've aged, what new things have grabbed your attention in a way they haven't before? How are you a different kind of person because of this?
 10. Where in your life would it help to say, 'Look what's happening!' rather than 'Look what's happening to me!'?
 11. Have you ever given your attention so deeply to something that you suddenly felt one with it? How did it change your living and loving?
 12. What in your life is hungry to be noticed?
 13. Are you paying enough attention to yourself??

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Monthly Theme 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

Upcoming Church Events

March 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>*REMINDER* - This calendar does not reflect outside groups' use of CCUU space. To avoid conflicts, please schedule all events with the church office – email ccuu@ccuu.org or call 847-359-8440 x 1</p>			<p>Mar 4 <i>Focus publication</i> 10am Telling Our Stories</p> <p>1pm 1st Weds Book Group</p>	<p>Mar 5 10am online Journaling Circle</p> <p>7pm Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>Mar 6</p>	<p>Mar 7 Wellness House Offerings 10am Elevator Speech Class</p>
<p>March 8 9 am Open Forum Discussion 10 am Worship & RE 11am Stewardship Cottage Meeting 11:30am Green Sanctuary Mtg 11:30am Biblical Literacy for UUs 5pm Tending the Spark 6:30pm Young Adult 'What is your job?' Night</p>	<p>Mar 9</p>	<p>Mar 10 7pm AHA Discussion</p>	<p>Mar 11 10am Reading Roundtable</p>	<p>Mar 12 10am Hai-ku Garden Workshop</p> <p>7pm Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>Mar 13 7pm Earth Rhythms Sound Journey</p>	<p>Mar 14 10am Elevator Speech Class 10:30 Tai Chi</p>
<p>Mar 15 *Pledge Forms Due 9 am Open Forum Discussion 10am Worship & RE 11am Fellowship 11:30am Shared Pulpit Worship Class 6:30pm Young Adult Monthly Planning Meeting</p>	<p>16</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18 PADS Meal 10am Living Well</p> <p>7pm Board of Trustees meeting</p>	<p>19 7pm Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21 10:30 Tai Chi</p>
<p>Mar 22 9 am Open Forum Discussion 10am Worship Service & RE 11am Fellowship 11:30am Shared Pulpit Worship Class 11:30am Path to Belonging 5pm Tending the Spark 6:30pm YA Tier Ranking Night 7pm Singing Resistance</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25 <i>Focus deadline</i> 10am Reading Roundtable</p>	<p>26 10am Transitions</p> <p>7pm Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>27 6pm No Kings poster making party</p>	<p>28 10am Fem. Divine Women's Group 10:30 Tai Chi</p>
<p>Mar 29 9 am Open Forum Discussion 10am Worship Service & RE 11am Fellowship 11:30am Path to Belonging 11:30am Biblical Literacy for UUs 11:30am Buddhist Study Group</p>	<p>Mar 30 7pm Last Mondays Book Discussion</p>	<p>Mar 31</p>	<p>April 1 <i>Focus publication</i> 10am Telling Our Stories</p> <p>1pm 1st Weds Book Group</p>	<p>April 2 10am online Journaling Circle</p> <p>7pm Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>April 3</p>	<p>April 4 Wellness House Offerings</p>
<p>April 5 Easter Sunday 9 am Open Forum Discussion 10 am Worship & RE 11 am Fellowship 6:30pm Young Adult Game Night</p>	<p>Apr 6</p>	<p>Apr 7</p>	<p>Apr 8 10am Reading Roundtable</p>	<p>Apr 9 10am Hai-ku Garden Workshop</p> <p>7pm Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>Apr 10 6pm Passover Seder</p>	<p>Apr 11 9am-Noon Earth Month Event</p>

focus

Published by Countryside Church UU

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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

- Weds. March 25 (publ. April 1)
- Monday, April 27 (publ. May 1)

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

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