

# October 2024

## Gwinnett News for Unitarian Universalists

### The Practice of Deep Listening

Listening helps us find our way. We listen to each other so we can connect. We turn to prayer to hear divine guidance. We listen to experts so we can learn... Like a flashlight that leads us through the darkness, listening helps us stay on course.

And yet maybe there's more to it than that. What if listening doesn't just guide us through the world, but also creates our world.

Just think about why you listen to those close to you. Is it really just to gather information? To hear the other clearly? When we intentionally listen to each other, our animal companions, the earth, we discover in those rare moments of deep listening that a space opens up around us? A space that is radically different than the space we inhabited moments prior. A space that feels sacred. A space that, once you've experienced it, you never want to leave.

Listening's value isn't just instrumental. It doesn't just help us collect and clarify information. It's not just a tool. It's a place! That sacred space of listening and being deeply listened to isn't just calling us home; it is home. Listening literally constructs the world we live in. And whom we become.

May this month, and our time together, help us take one more step toward listening our way home.



#### The Practice of Deep Listening

Curiosity. Courage. Compassion.



*"This is your chance to listen carefully.  
Your whole life might depend on what you  
hear."*

*~ Joyce Sutphen*

# Worship in October

Sundays at 11:00am

Theme:

The Practice of Deep Listening

Join us in-person or via Zoom

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



## October 6

### How Many Kinds of Listening Help Us to Grow?

Listening to more-than-human voices, experiential learning with spiritual practices that invite us to listen to others' stories, listening to and learning from the heartbreak of war ... In this wide-ranging service, we find our call to connection and to caring beyond the borders that can make our lives small.

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

## October 13

### Deep Listening

Listening is a form of perception, and it immediately places us in relationship to other beings. That is true of our UU values. They are relational values. Let us explore how to listen deeply through our values.

*Bob Patrick (he/him), Service Leader*

## October 20

### When We Listen to Our Bodies

More and more, science and psychology are joining longstanding spiritual traditions in giving credit to the wisdom we all carry in our bodies. Today, in this multigenerational service, we learn to listen deeply to what our bodies want us to know about how we need to live and care for ourselves and others. Through stories, music, great words on "what it takes to heal," and a few gentle practices of yoga-in-a-chair, this service invites us all into a deeper conversation. We also celebrate the official expansion of one of our beloved families—a wonderful example of listening deeply to inner wisdom to know how we want to live!

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

## October 27

### Healing Ancestral Trauma

Join us as we listen deeply to our ancestors and their trauma, and how it affects us and our acceptance of the future. Can we heal from generations of aggression and repair our bonds with our ancestors and future generations with love. This service covers many sensitive topics, including domestic violence and abandonment. Come and listen deeply to the healing words our ancestors are trying to give us.

*Candice Carver (she/her), Service Leader*

## Programs

Sundays at  
12:30pm

**1st Sunday, October 6**

Congregational Conversation

**2nd Sunday, October 13**

Spiral Scouts

(pre-registration required)

Belief Explorers

**3rd Sunday, October 20**

Sunday Tarot

**4th Sunday, October 27**

Good Trouble





# The Practice of Deep Listening: To Lean In, Softly, and Be Willing to Be Changed

by Rev. Nancy Palmer Jones (she/her)



When I worked as a hospital chaplain as part of my ministerial training, I would go into a patient's room and be so eager to be of service that I would physically strain as I leaned in hard and listened intently. Pretty soon my back would start to ache or my mouth would go dry, and I'd spend part of my energy trying to shoo away those distractions. Sure enough, when I needed to report on the visit afterward, I could only remember part of what the patient said or how they said it.

It turns out, I wasn't listening deeply to my own body. And if I wasn't noticing and grounding myself in what was going on inside of me, then I couldn't really make enough space to listen deeply and take in the other person's full presence.

This month's theme—the Practice of Deep Listening—invites us to listen both inwardly and outwardly. It reminds us to check in with ourselves, again and again every day, to take a breath and listen to how our mind, body, heart, and spirit are responding to this moment. What do we hear when we listen to ourselves?

And it invites us to make an opening for what another being wants to share with us. To do so, we must set aside our expectations or assumptions about what this encounter will bring. We need to open up once again to the fresh sensations of this person's voice, of that animal's sound, of this rainstorm's clanging on the metal gutters.

In *The Exquisite Risk: Daring to Live an Authentic Life*, Mark Nepo writes, "To listen is to continually give up all expectation and to give our attention, completely and freshly, to what is before us, not really knowing what we will hear or what that will mean. In the practice of our days, to listen is to lean in, softly, with a willingness to be changed by what we hear."

We need this skill of deep listening in all our relationships, from our one-to-one connections with a friend, a partner, a parent, a child, or a co-worker, to the complex interactions we share in a community like ours. If we want to know each other and love each other—which in turn make it possible for us to work and hang in there with each other—then we need to listen deeply to the being in front of us. And to do that, we need to take time to listen to ourselves deeply too.

To sum it all up: Love and Survival! There's a lot riding on this practice of deep listening!

This month, I invite us to ask ourselves, "When am I finding it hard to listen?" Can we check in with ourselves and care for what our bodies, minds, hearts, and spirits are trying to say?

Let's notice, too, when we are giving our attention completely to whatever moment we are in, without expectations or prejudging.

Finally, let's name and celebrate how all this deep listening changes us! For surely, this fall, this year, we need these connections and this capacity to hang in.

With Love at the center,

Rev. Nancy



# Get Committed

Thank you to everyone who participated in the VolunteerRen' Faire! The enthusiasm our congregation has demonstrated for doing great work in this season is amazing. Whether you want to work to Connect Within or to Connect Beyond, in providing a Radical Welcome or in creating a Green Space, helping our Spiritual Growth or serving our Governance, we recognize that in this democratic institution, WE ARE ALL THE LEADERSHIP OF UUCG.

The Board of Trustees has several standing Committees that report directly to the Board each month, and we hope that you will consider offering a generous gift of your time to one of these endeavors:

- The Pledge Drive Committee oversees and reports on the Annual Pledge Drive.
- The Buildings and Grounds Committee oversees and reports on the physical property of UUCG, including maintenance, repairs and improvements. This Committee coordinates with the Lay Ministry of Green Space to do the work in accordance with our Vision and Mission.
- The Safety and Security Committee oversees and reports on providing a safe and secure environment for the congregation and participants.
- Policies Committee oversees and reports on the review and any recommended amendments of the Policies. The Committee is responsible for presenting the Policies to the Congregation for approval at the annual Spring Business Meeting.
- The Giveaway the Plate Committee oversees selection and promotion of plate collections that are donated on a quarterly basis to organizations in the wider community.

If you are interested in how you can participate in service to the congregation through a Committee of the Board of Trustees, please reach out to: [board@uucg.org](mailto:board@uucg.org) for more information.

In beloved community,  
Dan Kelly (he/him)  
President, Board of Trustees



**BARROW  
COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION**



This quarter's Give Away the Plate recipient is the **Barrow County Community Fund.**

The Barrow Community Foundation, a 501(c)3 organization, has activated the Barrow Community Crisis Fund. Donations that are made to the Barrow Community Crisis Fund before June 25, 2025 will be designated specifically to support organizations that serve the needs of the people of Barrow County in the recovery from the tragedy that occurred at Apalachee High School on September 4. These organizations may include the Barrow County School System, specific Barrow County schools, government agencies such as law enforcement and public safety, non-profit organizations that provide direct services to people affected by the incident, and other organizations that are impacting the recovery effort. Your generous support is greatly appreciated.

# Reflections on Ingathering *By Rev. Nancy Palmer Jones (she/her)*

At UUCG's Ingathering ceremony on September 8, we filled in the blank on two sentences:

·“This summer I learned ...”—representing the fresh wisdom we bring to this new congregational year  
·“At UUCG this year, I hope we will ...”—listing the hopes and visions that will serve as our compass as we navigate this new year

At other “stations,” we awakened our senses with sound, created talismans out of clay, and wove our life's thread into the life of the community. Afterward, we celebrated the robustness of our congregation with the VolunteeRen' Faire!

Here is a summary of the learnings and the hopes out of which this year will grow, with just a few sample quotes out of the many.

## **LEARNINGS:**

This summer I learned ...

- Joy in the Midst of Challenge: “to have hope again,” “that life is beautiful even in hard times”
- Self-Acceptance and Self-Worth: “I am enough as I am”
- How to Love Unconditionally
- Patience!
- How to Connect, and Reconnect, with People: “to know my family again after many years apart,” “it's not always easy to get out, but I almost never regret it”
- About Health, Healing, Trauma, and the Need for Care
- New Skills: how to play mandolin and bass guitar, how to speak Japanese and dye fabric with lichen, “how to fly again”
- Just How Beautiful the Grand Canyon Is in Person and other life-changing experiences

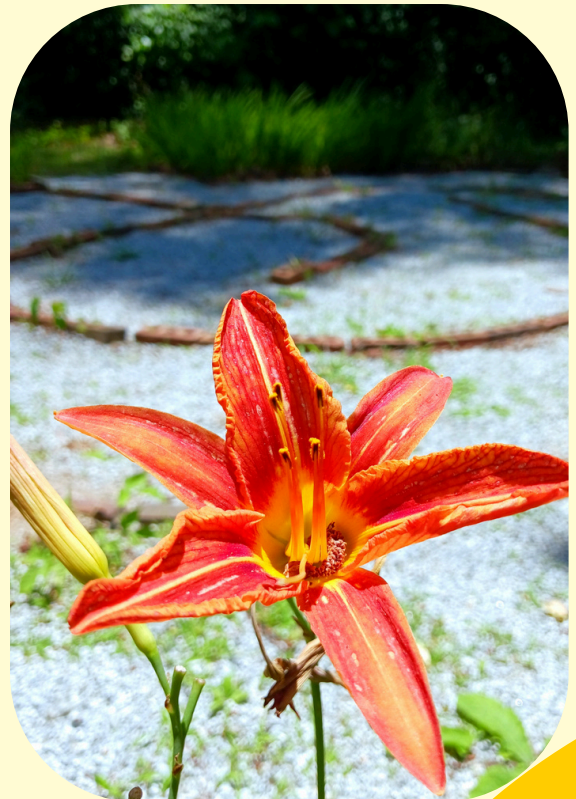
## **Shared Reflection:**

- How will we harvest all this wisdom this year, never underestimating the gifts we bring to this community?
- What will we organize, launch, and put into place this year because of these expressed hopes and visions, in conjunction with the needs of these times?

## **HOPES AND VISIONS:**

At UUCG this year, I hope we will ...

- Create a Safer Space for All: “to have a space to feel safe and cared for.” We are all committed to creating a safer space for everyone. Please come to our Minister and our Coordinator of Family Ministries with any concerns, and we will help!
- Engage in More Community Outreach: Lots of energy and hope for this!
- Grow in Many Different Ways: The most common theme! For example: “more families with children,” “more for middle- and high-school-aged youth,” “more volunteering,” “grow in number, connection, and Love,” “unify as humans,” “change the world”
- Commit to the Climate Justice Movement
- Put Justice into Action: “not just learning but doing,” “contact those in power,” “extend and expand our Culture of Care in justice, multiculturalism, and religious diversity”
- Support and Experi-learn with Worship Services
- Offer Special Events: fall craft show/sale; dances, concerts, poetry; opportunities to connect in a deeper way (i.e., retreat)
- Personal goals/hopes: “have more time to come,” “I hope I will find my place”



# Ministry of Radical Welcome

## Message From the Lay Minister for Radical Welcome

*By Carol Underwood (she/her)*

As we just had a whole month thinking about invitation, a great way to practice invitation would be to come join hospitality! Something as simple as setting out snacks or making coffee can really make people feel welcome and invited in the congregation. Thinking of when we invite people into our homes we would want to have snacks and coffee set out for our reflective conversations with those who we invite in. We do have some secret dedicated folx who have been doing the hard work but I would like to spread out the opportunities for others as well. We just need a couple of folx to set out our spread during the offering and a couple of folx to clean up after coffee hour. Don't worry if you don't know your way around the kitchen. I will make sure you're prepared. The coffee pot is intimidating but really friendly. If you have already been doing it, thank you! Please still email me ([radicalwelcome@uucg.org](mailto:radicalwelcome@uucg.org)) so I can organize and know who will be here and give everyone a turn. That way if you need a day off or can't be here I can move things around.

If you can't commit to setting up, bringing snacks and coffee creamers for Sunday morning would also be joyfully received. We are always on the lookout for snacks that are gluten free, dairy free, and vegan with all sorts of combinations to welcome all snackers needs. If you could let me know when you want to bring something it would be helpful so we don't have days of want and days of overabundance. Please email me at [radicalwelcome@uucg.org](mailto:radicalwelcome@uucg.org) with any questions



# Ministry of Green Space

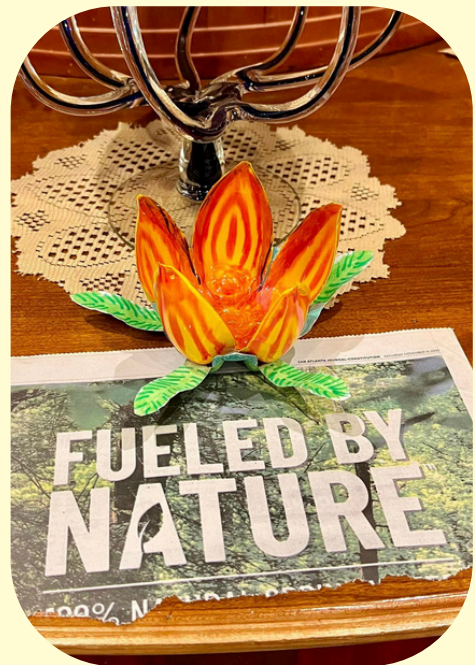
## Climate Justice Revival

*UUCG Worker Bees Unite!*

October 5th at  
10:00 AM

### PROPERTY BEAUTIFICATION

Opportunities for helpers  
of all abilities and skill levels



October 20



**Labyrinth  
Rededication**



# Lay Ministry of Spiritual Growth

**October 5th @ 2pm**

## **CUUPS Working with Spirits of the Land**

We invite you to join us in exploring a variety of practices and techniques to connect with the Spirits of Nature, including trees, plants, fungi, and the many creatures that share the space around the UUCG building. Together, we will engage our subtle senses and intuition to feel, see, listen, smell, and touch the energies and presences surrounding us. If you have a personal method for attuning to nature, we warmly encourage you to share it with the group!

Please dress according to the weather on the day of the event. To enhance your comfort, we recommend bringing mats, blankets, camp chairs, warm beverages, and perhaps an umbrella in case of rain, so we can fully enjoy our time together.

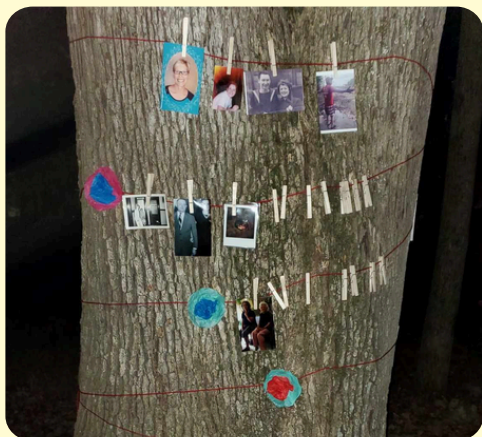
**November 2nd @ 6pm**

## **Samhain**

We will honor our beloved dead by hanging pictures on a string around Big Mama, the large oak at the entrance to the grove.

Consider printing photos on paper you won't mind losing if they get wet, but feel free to bring them however you like. If you don't have or prefer not to bring photos, you can choose an image or symbol that represents your ancestors, elders, or ancient ones.

**Congregation members are also invited to participate as well.**



## **What to Bring To A Ritual**

- Offering to Mother Earth
- Canned goods for the Food Drive to Lawrenceville Coop
- Drums and/or other instruments to use during ritual
- A dish to share for potluck
- Your Staff or Wand
- Druid egg to place on the altar
- Other items instructed on Facebook Event



# Lay Ministry of Spiritual Growth

## Silent Supper Wednesday, October 30th

*Hosted by Daniel Bailey (he/him) and Sherree Bailey (she/her)*

We invite you to a potluck dinner in honor of our Beloved Dead, both human and animal.

### 7:30-8:00 PM

The decoration and preparation of the tables will be part of our ceremony. Please bring photos or small belongings (such as jewelry, sacred tools, collars, or favorite toys) that represent your Beloveds. If you have candles, we ask that you bring red, white, or black ones. Additionally, bring a sacred tool of your own (an athame, tarot deck, wand, chalice, stone, ring, etc.) to be blessed during the ceremony.

Please also bring a dish of your Beloved's favorite food to share with the group. When signing up, kindly mention what dish you'll be bringing so we can ensure a well-rounded meal.

### 8:00 PM

At this time, the front door will be locked to maintain the sacred silence during the ceremony. You will fill your plate in the kitchen, and silence will begin once you enter the Sanctuary.

There will be two empty plates at the head of the table to represent the God, the Goddess, and our Beloved Dead. You are invited to place a small offering of vegan food (such as fruit, vegetables, or bread) on the Goddess's plate, which will later be taken outside as an offering to the land. This is optional. You may also place a small bite of your Beloved's favorite food on the God's plate, which will be disposed of in a sacred manner.

In the center of the table, light a small candle for each of your Beloveds. Once everyone is seated, a bell will be rung to signal the beginning of the ceremony. You will then choose a poem (from several provided) and read it silently to yourself. As you eat, hold your Beloved in your heart and mind.

Once dinner is finished, a second bell will ring to signal the end of the silent period. You may then help yourself to dessert and fill your glass. If you wish, we will take turns sharing stories of our Beloveds and why we chose to honor them during this ceremony.

After the sharing, we will each wash our plates and help restore the Sanctuary. This is a symbolic dismantling of the sacred space, and all are encouraged to contribute.

This ritual is open to everyone, of any age, who can maintain silence for the 20-minute communion period. Please note that childcare will not be provided.

### Prayer of Offering:

From the dawn of your birth  
To the sunset of your death,  
I honor you.  
From the missions you completed  
To the duties left undone,  
I honor you.  
From the seasons of your being  
Through the cycle of your life,  
I honor you.  
From your time beyond the veil  
'Til your earth entrance back again,  
May the angels support you.  
May Spirit surround you.  
May my healing love reach you  
From this moment until the end of time.



# Ministry of Spiritual Growth

## Appreciation From The A/V Team

When the pandemic struck, UUCG, like so many others, had to pivot quickly to an online format, which meant that our services required a functioning camera that could serve in a broadcast format. We are so fortunate that a congregant, Jackie Gammon, was able to donate the XL-1 that became our primary camera.

That first online service carried with it this message in the Order of Service:

In our first virtual service, we explore how social distancing and connecting beyond our walls can feed us spiritually in the coming weeks. How do we continue to hold one another close from a distance?

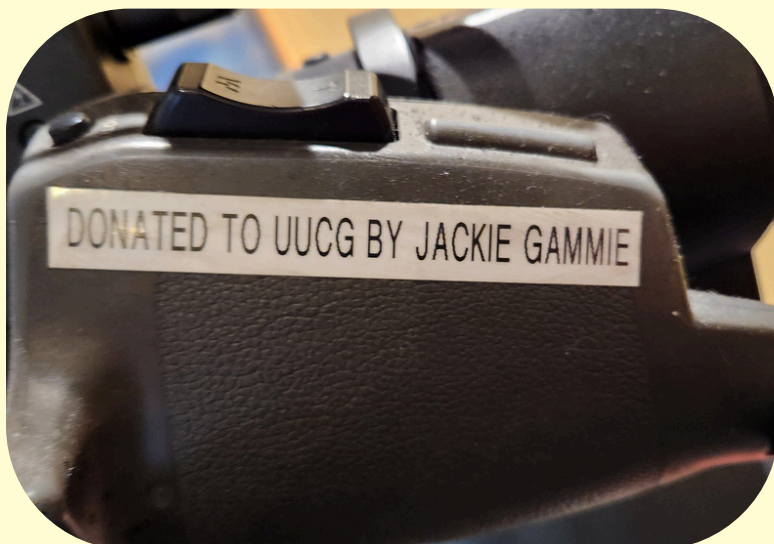
And the donated XL-1 held us close, indeed. Because it had a professional-quality zoom lens, it was able to provide a high-quality option to continue offering services. The XL-1 brought us into community each week.

As technology changed, and our online presence developed into a sophisticated multi-camera presentation, the needs of our community grew. We are grateful for the recent anonymous donation of a 4K-resolution camera with a professional zoom lens that now serves as our primary “close up.” We hope our online community can see and feel the improvement as we continue to work toward connecting everyone as one congregation, in covenant.

Thank you, XL-1! Your contribution to the growth of this community cannot be overstated!

--Dan Kelly (he/him)

On behalf of the A/V Team



# Ministry of Connecting Within

## Connecting Within *By Lisa Kiel (she/her)*

Right now, the political climate is pushing people into opposing camps, but, thankfully, that's not the only climate surrounding us. We are also part of a community, united by values and rooted in love. We actually have a responsibility to listen to others. How do we shift from a closed to an open mind? How do we allow ourselves to change? One way is to adopt a practice of Deep Listening. We could engage in conversations that focus on listening, not responding. We could sit with silence allowing our thoughts to flow freely. We could come together with others also willing to "lean in softly."

When I think about the practice of Deep Listening, I naturally think about Covenant Groups. These small groups are the perfect place to learn and practice the deep listening skills so essential for developing compassion and empathy. If you have never participated in a Covenant Group or you've been taking a break, please consider our Monday night group. It meets every second Monday of the month from 7-9 pm online. We are accepting newcomers all year long, so even if you've missed some sessions, please register and come join us as we share and listen and change.

You might consider The Wi\$dom Path another opportunity to listen deeply. This program focuses on three themes: Money and Self, Money and Society, and Money, Spirit and Life. Are you curious what your experiences with money can teach you about yourself? Do you want to know more about how our perceptions of money affect our society including economic and social justice issues? Just how do we address the financial aspects of congregational life and balance our values and our finances? Please, don't hesitate to attend even if you've missed a few sessions of The Wi\$dom Path. You may join this program at any time, but I encourage you to drop in right away. You might be surprised at what you learn! The program is being facilitated by Ian Sice and the dates are listed below.

Sometimes, we need special groups to attend, where we feel more accepted and more at home. We need others to listen with true understanding. If you are Queer or questioning, you are invited to attend Alphabet SoUUup, UUCG's LGBTQ+ caucus group. A caucus group is created when a community within our community has requested a group dedicated to their specific needs and interests. Alphabet SoUUup is run by the LGBTQ+ community here at UUCG, and participation is limited to LGBTQ+ folx. The group meets on the 1st Monday of the month, and has dedicated use of the building, guarding privacy for all members. Please come and share in this month's potluck and conversation. Questions? Speak with Dmitri Novak or Aline Harris.

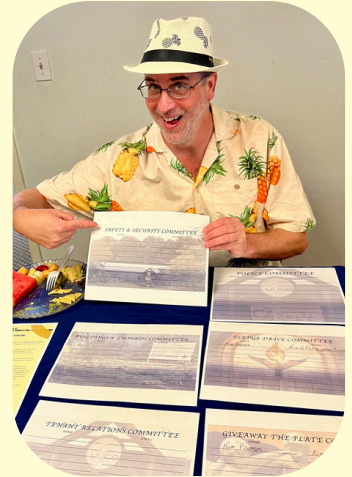
This month, let's consider all the ways we can be changed by the art of listening to one another.

Lisa

"To listen is to lean in softly with the willingness to be changed by what we hear." -Mark Nepo

# Ministry of Connecting Within

## VolunteeREN FAIR!



# Book Group

October 23rd at 7:00pm

**When the Nightingale Sings by Suzanne Kelman**

1939, Berlin, Cambridge, Paris, California. The world is in the grips of a terrible war. Can two young women change the course of history?

As war is declared in Europe, shy young Judy Morgan finishes her studies in Physics at Cambridge University. She never thought she'd be friends with someone as beautiful and glamorous as Hedy Lamarr, a young Jewish woman who has fled the Nazis, but Judy can't ignore her brilliance. see more...



# Ministry of Connecting Within

**Ongoing Connecting Within Opportunities: For more info, check out the CW bulletin board located beside the Library entrance!**

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

Chalice Circle - monthly meeting set by members

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

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

QUUest D&D- Adults: In Person: 4th Friday at 6pm Online: 3rd Friday at 7 pm

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

Spiral Scouts - In Person 2nd Sunday at 12:30pm

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

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

Wi\$dom Path - Online Mondays:  
Aug 19, Sept 2, Sept 16, Sept 30,  
Oct 14, Nov 4, Nov 18, Dec 2,  
Dec 16, Jan 6, Jan 20, and Feb 3,  
<https://zoom.us/j/97595388772>

Covenant Groups - 2nd Monday  
online at 7-9 pm  
Registration is still open!



# Ministry of Connecting Beyond

## Reinforcing Our Bridges *By Candice Carver (she/her)*

It's easy to think of our community work as just another aspect of our love, but I realized it's so much more—it's a bridge, a way we share our values to our wider community. Each member here plays a role, contributing to a collective effort that extends beyond these walls.

We already have a solid foundation for community outreach, with our contributions to the Lawrenceville Co-Op, JoAnn's work with El Refugio, and Barbara's connections not just with the Gwinnett Interfaith Alliance but many other non profits. I've worked in marketing and have talent in expanding a business' presence; I've learned that it's crucial to start with what you already have.

How can we strengthen these bonds?

What are your dreams?

Do we want to host a roundtable with the Lawrenceville Co-Op, JoAnn, or the Gwinnett Interfaith Alliance to identify areas where we can contribute more? Can we offer classes, event space, panel discussion, volunteerism, or advocacy?

It's one thing to volunteer, but another thing to create and increase our visibility to the broader community. Can we get together to create UUCG Swag? Dmitri and I have a dream to create shirts and hats, Christiana is working on magnets and we have cute little key chains. Who can help us with this dream? Can you help with time, talent, or treasure?

We are ALWAYS looking for help to expand our visibility on and off social media. But one very simple way to help us be seen in the community is to like, comment, and share the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Gwinnett facebook page linked here. What other ideas do you have to invite people from our surrounding areas to engage?

Each person has a unique skill and passion, tell us what it is so that we can connect you and together we will build a stronger web of outreach in our community.

By strengthening the bonds we've already formed and expanding our presence, we're not just serving the community—we're growing as individuals and as a congregation. These connections don't just reflect our values; they breathe life into them.

Together, we can continue to bridge the gap between our congregation walls and the wider community, ensuring that our values are known to everyone.



# Ministry of Connecting Beyond



## Join the PLANNING TEAM

*Our goal is to plan special events for UUCG to increase our presence in the community*

Email  
connectingbeyond@uucg  
for more info



LAWRENCEVILLE CO-OP  
COMMUNITY FOOD BANK MINISTRY  
**COLLECTING ON  
OCTOBER 6TH**

Get Involved with  
**UU the VOTE**



### *October Weekly Phone Bank Events*

**October 1, 2024**

7:00 PM - 9:00 PM ET

**October 8, 2024**

7:00 PM - 9:00 PM ET

**October 15, 2024**

7:00 PM - 9:00 PM ET

**October 22, 2024**

7:00 PM - 9:00 PM ET

**October 25, 2024**

7:00 PM - 9:00 PM ET

**October 29, 2024**

7:00 PM - 9:00 PM ET



**SAVE THE DATE**  
**OR TRUNK or Treat**  
**OCTOBER 26, 2024**  
12 BETHESDA CHURCH ROAD,  
LAWRENCEVILLE, GA 30044 **STARTS AT 4PM**

# Ministry of Connecting Beyond

## Interfaith Alliance Peace Festival

"The first interfaith Peace Festival was held on September 21st (the 25th anniversary of the International Day of Peace) at . Guru Nanak Mission Society of Atlanta. UUCG, in partnership with the Gwinnett Interfaith Alliance and Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Guru Nanak Mission Society, Pagan and Druid, J Michael Rollins, and City of Knowledge Islamic School presented a day of music, discussions, and kinship with a goal of promoting peace and understanding among folks with a diversity of beliefs and perspectives. The day was a promising beginning and a great success; and we look forward to future events such as this one!"



**Let's celebrate love, inclusion, and community together!**

Join UU's from all over at Atlanta Pride! Wear your Side with Love attire or PRIDE attire. Connect with others at Piedmont Park near the pinned location below.

**UNITED WITH PRIDE**  
**ATLANTA PRIDE 2024**  
**October 13th at 11AM**

