



Summer 2026

Welcome New Council Members

At its February meeting, the UU Women's Connection Council welcomed one new and two returning members to the Council. Dana Lusk and Diana DeWeese return after a year or two off, and we warmly welcome new Council member Peggy Morken from Southern Illinois. We'll tell you more about them later in this newsletter.

Council also elected new officers for 2026.

Our spring and July meetings were mostly about retreat planning.

Following up on our plans to take our retreats to more locations around the MidAmerica Region, we are looking at other ways to connect with you. Watch this space - we may be coming to your congregation!

UU Women's Connection Council Members 2026

Gretchen Ohmann, President/Newsletter (-2026)

info@uuwomensconnection.org

Nyx Firebourn, Vice-President (-2027)

Kathy Miller, Treasurer (-2026) treasurer@uuwomensconnection.org

Diana DeWeese, Secretary (-2028)

Sage Hagy, At-Large (-2026)

Karen Kortsch, Past President (-2026)

Dana Lusk, At-Large (-2028)

Tori Johnson, At-Large (-2027)

Jenn Johnson, At-Large (-2027)

Peggy Morken, At-Large (-2028)



Join us for a weekend or just for Saturday! We'll gather at the enchanting Ronora Lodge and Retreat Center in Watervliet, Michigan, August 14-16. The modern Cherry Wood Lodge is bright, airy, and accessible too.

2026 is our 10th year of reviving a long-time summer tradition. Walks through the woods, conversations in the yard, communal meal prep in the kitchen, maybe a field trip to our favorite nearby esoteric shop, a swim in the private Lake Sherwood... and even a couple of workshops.

Cost per person: (double or triple, no singles available)

Full Weekend - lodging and meals \$260

Full Weekend - Tent or Camper - \$220

Commuter No lodging, lunch Saturday \$110

Commuter No lodging, lunch and dinner Saturday \$130

Commuter No lodging, Friday dinner, 3 meals Saturday \$155

[Download and share the flyer !](#)

Spring 2026 Retreat

Pilgrim Park
near Princeton IL

May 28-31

Nestled in the peaceful, wooded grounds of Pilgrim Park in Princeton, Illinois, the Unitarian Universalist



Women's Connection (UUWC) Spring Retreat offered a beautiful sanctuary for connection, creativity, and spiritual renewal. Over the course of four days, attendees stepped away from the hustle of daily life to embrace a balanced rhythm of meaningful workshops, communal rituals, and restorative "Time for You."

The retreat kicked off on Thursday evening, welcoming attendees as they checked into the Center. After a nourishing dinner, the community gathered in the Chapel for a Welcome Gathering, setting a collaborative and grounded tone for the days. This theme of interconnectedness carried over into the crafts area, where a large communal table hosted a giant "Pencils" jigsaw puzzle. *(Take a look at the photos on our website for more of the story!)*

Thank you to our vendors: Gretchen with UU Women and Religion jewelry and books, and Gina with garments, jewelry, and MASSAGES!

By Sunday morning, the community gathered one last time for breakfast and for a Closing Ritual in the Chapel. Hugs were exchanged, luggage was packed, and final goodbyes were whispered.

While the physical Maypole may be unwrapped and the campfires gone cold, the women of the UUWC returned home with newly dyed shirts, hand-printed art, and re-energized spirits—reminding everyone of the beautiful tapestry that forms when women gather to listen, create, and lift each other up.

-- Kathy Miller, UU Women's Connection Treasurer

Spring 2026 Keynote Speech: Weaving Resistance

Emily Mace, Intern Minister at Unity Temple in Oak Park, IL

Emily started her presentation by passing out strands of yarn. She called them “Charms of Hope.” As you tied the string around your finger, consider that we are not alone. She said “think of it as our best shared future how it is braided with our present and our destiny.” The tied string can be for hope or for whatever support you need. As we untied the strand we were “letting go of our burdens and bleakness.” Letting them fall away.

She told the story of her friend Tracy Wright, who started a Knitters group in Portland, Oregon, “Knitters Against Fascism.” I learned a new term “Craftivists” – Crafters who are Activists. Tracy

invited knitters to come to the ICE detention center in Portland to show the world that Portland was not in flames! Tracy said, “Bring your camp chair and coffee and come and stitch.”

First there were 5 stitchers, then 10 and then it made NPR. They were “Weapons of Mass Construction.” Emily said her friend was part of a much bigger tapestry. A garment of destiny. Emily quoted Dr. Martin Luther King – “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly.” [READ MORE ABOUT EMILY MACE'S SPEECH](#)



Winter Retreat

by Kathy Miller



The winter retreat at Toddhall Retreat Center was a refreshing and meaningful time of connection, reflection, and community. With a warm Unitarian Universalist spirit at its center, the retreat offered space for participants to slow down, enjoy one another's company, and share in a spirit of welcome, curiosity, and care.

Spa Retreat Activities

The weekend had a gentle spa-retreat feeling that helped set a tone of rest and renewal. Participants enjoyed face masks, foot moisturizer socks, moisturizer gloves, and even doing manicures for one another, which added a playful and nurturing element to the experience. These simple activities supported the larger purpose of the retreat: creating time away from daily responsibilities to restore body, mind, and spirit.

AI Workshop

A workshop on ****introduction to AI****, led by Elaine Orr, gave the retreat a thoughtful learning dimension and encouraged shared conversation. The small group size turned out to be a gift, allowing for deeper interaction and a more personal sense of community. Even though the group was small, it was lively, engaged, and fun, which made the retreat feel especially warm and connected.

Toddhall Experience

Toddhall provided an excellent setting for the weekend. The food was very good, the grounds offered many places to walk and enjoy the outdoors, and the weather was perfect throughout the retreat. All of these pieces came together to create an atmosphere that felt peaceful, welcoming, and restorative.

UU Community Spirit

Most importantly, the retreat reflected the values that make Unitarian Universalist gatherings so meaningful: belonging, shared learning, mutual care, and the joy of being together in community. It was a weekend that nourished participants not only through relaxation and good food, but also through meaningful connection and a spirit of openness and inclusion.

Joy in Absence

by Nyx Ember

At times we can be the orchestrator of our own discomfort. We choose things for our lives and at times we don't consider the weight those things may have. Protecting your joy is not only about preserving your own happiness. It preserves both your mental and physical health. Life is stressful enough without adding things that create more hardship. That's not self love or care. What may logically be the right thing may not be the most healthy thing for your life. Wisdom is learning your limits and where to step back for your own personal well being.



It's been three years since I started my journey for a more joyful existence. Some things I kept in my life out of obligation even though I knew they were causing me harm. I wanted to be a good person. I wanted to do the right thing. I had no peace. I was never able to rest my body or my thoughts. Rest is necessary for a positive experience and peaceful life. You can't live in chaos and expect peace or joy. You can't heal or be healthy without the ability to regenerate through effective rest.

The absence of negative things, people and situations creates the foundation needed for joy. Doing an honest inventory of what creates peace and what creates despair and hopelessness are very important. When I started this journey this felt like such a selfish thought, however, you must protect yourself and your joy. People thrive and grow in joy.

I have learned that the most important person to me has to be me. I am the first layer of protection and the one who knows me more intimately than anyone else ever can. Protecting my peace must be a priority. I can't care for myself or anyone else when I'm not at my best. I deserve to be my best. You deserve your best you. You deserve JOY.

~Nyx

Fall Retreat

October 16-18, 2026

We'll return to Cedar Valley Retreat Center near West Bend, Wisconsin

photo courtesy of Cedar Valley



Winter Retreat

January 29-31, 2027

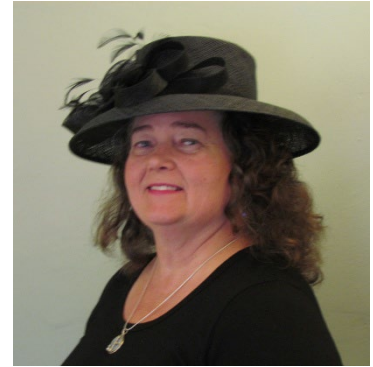
We'll return to Toddhall Retreat Center near St. Louis

photo courtesy of Toddhall Retreat Center

Meet the Connection Council

Diana DeWeese, Secretary (-2028)

I served on the UU Women's Connection Council from 2020-2023 and 2014 – 2019. I have been a member of the Abraham Lincoln UU Congregation in Springfield for a long time. I enjoy drumming, singing in the choir and being the registrar for our week long Ecology Camp at ALUUC. I also enjoy photography and sewing – having made several quilts in the past 5 years.



My husband and I have lived in the same house for almost 45 years. As teenagers, my children found this to be very boring! But having lived in 17 different homes/places growing up, I thought a little stability would be best. Wrong again! After we retired, my husband and I have taken a few trips to Europe to “find our roots”. Oh, did I mention I am heavy into genealogy.



Peggy Morken (At-Large) (-2028)

Peggy Morken first became a UU at the Fargo/Moorhead UU Fellowship in 1989, while still an undergrad. She read the 7 Principles and immediately knew that she had found her spiritual home. After 59 years living, and then teaching, in Minnesota, Peggy retired and moved, with her husband and dog, to Illinois for proximity to grandchildren and for kinder, gentler winters.

Peggy is delighted to be an involved member of the Springfield ALUUC. She and her now TWO dogs spend their mornings hiking and playing in and around the pond. Peggy loves to read, crochet, play around with various musical instruments, and cook tasty meals. She occasionally gets some housework done. Her latest craft experiments have involved making four-direction altar cloths using sections of colored fabric, stencils, bleach pens, and fabric markers. It has been a mixed success to date, but hope springs eternal.

Tea & Talk dates

SEPTEMBER 19 - Diana D and Marissa D

OCTOBER 31 - Gretchen O

All our events are listed on our [CALENDAR](#)

What are women doing in YOUR congregation?

UU Women's Connection Newsletter "Voices of Women" returns in the Fall. Deadline for submissions is October 31! newsletter@uuwomensconnection.org

UU Women's News

Visit our siblings' websites for more information.

UU Women and Religion uuwr.org

- [2026 Store Tour Dates](#)
- [Chalice Earrings](#)
- [Share the Plate for UUW&R](#)

International Convocation of UU Women icuuw.org

- [Including Men is Essential in Advancing Gender Equality](#)
- [UU Women in the Philippines - Annual Conference](#)
- [Empowering Maasai Women Through Sustainable Water Access](#)

SisterSoUUrce sistersource.org

- [Sister Source Facebook page](#)
- [Monthly Global Worship Service](#)

UU Women's Federation uuwf.org

- [Movement Reflections from Rev. Denise Graves](#)
- [Mothering is Courageous Spiritual Labor](#)
- [Mothering the Movement](#)

Pacific Central Women and Religion pcduuwr.org

- [Spring Retreat 2027](#)

SouthWest UU Women swuuw.org

- [SWUUWCon 2027 - August 27-29, near Dallas](#)

Canadian UU Women's Association cuuwa.ca

- [New Adventures Await: Vyda's farewell](#)
- [Meditative Poetry for IWD 2026](#)
- [CUUWA Re-connecting Embers meeting recap](#)

UUA Top Stories

- [Elected Positions on Boards, Committees, and Commissions to be Filled at General Assembly 2027](#)
- [UUA Condemns U.S. Supreme Court Decision in Noem vs. Al Otro Lado](#)
- [Communion at the Drag Show](#)

Did you know?

Back in the day (early 2000s), the Central MidWest District Women and Religion Committee would offer to conduct a creative, musical Sunday service for congregations in our area. UU Women's Connection is about to bring back this tradition. Stay tuned!



Unitarian Universalist Women's Connection

*Connecting people who identify as women and gender-expansive folks
in the MidAmerica Region UUA*



Copyright © 2026 UU Women's Connection. All rights reserved.

UUWomensConnection.org