

February 2025

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How Do We Define Greatness?

Octavia Butler's 1998 novel "Parable of the Talents" shows a dystopian 2032 America beset with climate collapse, lawlessness, starvation and anarchy. A US Senator runs for President (a figurehead position at this point) promising to "Make America Great Again" based upon a religious fundamentalism of re-enslavement of people and religious pogroms to cleanse the country of those who don't belong to a strand of a particular faith.

Does this sound a bit familiar? Just what does make a country "great" anyway? I know how our President measures greatness; and it's the same way he measures everything else....\$\$\$\$!!!

But seriously, what makes a country "great"? Is it based on GDP? Might it be based upon how many of its citizens vote? Or what kind of healthcare is provided (if any)? Or how it cares for its most vulnerable? Or maybe it's inversely proportional to the extent of income inequality? Or how many people make a living wage?

The U.S. would surely score high marks in all of these categories, right? 😊

I asked ChatGPT "What is the list of the top ten greatest countries?"

Here's the result:

There isn't a universally agreed-upon list of the "top ten greatest countries," as what makes a country "great" can vary depending on the criteria being considered, such as quality of life, economic power, education, healthcare, or even cultural influence. However, various rankings and surveys often highlight countries based on specific factors.

Some common rankings that evaluate countries in different areas include the Human Development

Index (HDI), World Happiness Report, and Global Power Index. Countries that frequently appear near the top in these rankings include:

Norway – Often ranked highly in terms of HDI, quality of life, and social equality.

Switzerland – Known for its strong economy, healthcare system, and quality of life.

Denmark – Regularly at the top of the World Happiness Report and famous for its welfare state.

Sweden – Offers high standards of living, progressive policies, and good social support systems.

Finland – Frequently ranks first in education and happiness.

Canada – Known for its multiculturalism, high quality of life, and stable economy.

Germany – An economic powerhouse in Europe with a high standard of living and strong infrastructure.

Australia – Recognized for its quality of life, education, and healthcare systems.

Netherlands – Famous for its excellent social policies, progressive values, and quality healthcare.

New Zealand – Known for its natural beauty, high quality of life, and strong social welfare system.

Wait a minute! Something must be wrong! There must be a mistake. Most of these countries have bad weather so how can their citizens be happy? And the United States didn't even make the list!

.....to be continued next month...

Nurture our spirit. Strive for Justice. Transform the world.

Dave

P.S. In the "Parable of the Talents" novel, US Senator Jarret wins the Presidency...yet his tenure as Commander in Chief is an abysmal failure and he ends up in disgrace.

Our Ministerial Intern



Meet Our Ministerial Intern
– Liz Martin

Liz is a candidate for UU
ministry who completed her
Master's of Divinity at
Emory University's Candler

School of Theology in May 2022. In addition to being an intern minister at UUMAN, she is a full-time Program Coordinator for the Emory University Chaplaincy's Interfaith Center.

Prior to moving to Atlanta in 2019, she was a life-long westerner having spent most of her life in Salt Lake City, Utah. She is a sixth-generation Mormon who found the local UU church to be a balm of acceptance after her faith crisis and has been a UU since 1996. She served both congregations in the Salt Lake Valley as a professional UU religious educator, for a total of 11 years, before taking the leap to attend seminary.

Liz has a wonderfully supportive partner-in-adventures in her spouse, Russ, and their family includes two adult children and a grand-cat. In her spare time, Liz loves to crochet, read, attend concerts, ride bikes, and take road trips. Some of the topics she is most passionate about include prison reform/abolition, comprehensive sexuality education for all ages, interfaith dialogue, and vegan doughnuts.

Liz will be interning at UUMAN through December 2026. She can be reached at intern@uuman.org

Thanks,
Dave



Association for UU Music Ministries

Hello,

I'm reaching out to you on behalf of the Association for UU Music Ministries (AUUMM). Our annual conference is coming up (July 23-27 in Atlanta) and we're trying to get the word out to UU musicians far and wide, including any and all the musicians in your congregation!

AUUMM is the professional association of UU musicians, so we particularly hope any staff musicians from your congregation will join us in Atlanta. But our conference this year also features quite a lot of programming for non-professionals, so we want to be sure to reach out to choir members, instrumentalists, and any other musicians of any kind in the congregation.

Would you be willing to share this invitation in the congregation's newsletter and share it with the rest of the church staff team as well? I'm attaching two versions of our logo as well in case you'd like to add it to your materials.

If you have any questions, Please don't hesitate to contact me.

Many thanks!

Allison King
Executive Administrator
Association for UU Music Ministries

admin@auumm.org

402-937-6647

<https://scheduler.zoom.us/auumm-admin>

UUMAN Chili Cookoff

If it's cold outside and there's still snow in spots, it must be time for one of UUMAN's favorite social events—the Chili Cookoff! Enjoy multiple cups of hearty chilis and soups with your UUMAN community. And at the end of the day, you might take home fabulous prizes and bragging rights for a year over all your UUMAN friends.

The UUMAN Chili Cookoff will be held on Sunday, February 9, after second hour. We will once again have four divisions:

- **Chili**
- **Vegetarian Chili**
- **Soup (veggie or not)**
- **Cornbread**

All are invited, whether you bring food or not. Everyone gets to taste and vote on their faves! We'll be needing coleslaw, desserts, and sides (that don't require heating), as well as volunteers for setup and cleanup.

Prizes will be awarded for each category. Due to electrical limitations in Fellowship Hall, we can only accept the first 16 entrants for chilis/soups. Sign up [here](#)



Our 50/50 Shared Plate

Every month, we share our offering with a non-profit or cause. Half of the cash on the first Sunday of the month is included in the total. All month long, checks with 50-50 written on the memo line and Breeze Donations designated 50-50 are included. Half of the Share the Plate total for the month goes to the recipient and the other half goes to UUMAN.

In December, North Fulton Community Charities and UUMAN each received a total of \$874.44 from Share the Plate.

For January, we are sharing our offering with Worthy Now Prison Ministry of the UUA Church of the Larger Fellowship. Worthy Now is a mission of the UUA Church of the Larger Fellowship. They encourage letter writing between people on both sides of prison walls into beloved community.

They declare that all persons are worthy of love, respect, and support — not at some future time when we are better people — but as we are right now.

Go to worthynow@clfuu.org to learn more.

2024 was a great year for Share the Plate. We collected \$14,712.20 or \$7,356.10 each for our community organizations and UUMAN. Thank you for your generosity to our community and UUMAN.

Joan Rossi

Share the Plate Coordinator

North Fulton Community Charities News

Most of you know about our social justice partner, North Fulton Community Charities, located not far from UUMAN on Elkins Road in Roswell. UUMAN has a monthly workday in the NFCC thrift store and quite a few UUMAN members work a regular shift in the food pantry.

Here are some things you might not know about NFCC.

The NFCC Food Pantry supplies more than food. They provide cleaning supplies, over the counter medications and toiletry/hygiene items to clients. These are some of our most popular requests because these are things that cannot be purchased with food stamps.

UUMAN has a donation basket in the foyer by the front doors. If you would like to donate items, leave them there and a UUMAN member will deliver them to NFCC. You can also drop off donations to NFCC at their drive-up donation door.

Most needed items this month:

- **Toilet paper**
- **Toothpaste**
- **Canned tuna**

- Rosie Popp.

MCY February Times

Lexie T. Brown
Director of Religious Education

Looking back at January

We started the new year strong, returning to Religious Exploration after winter break! However, winter had other plans, and a snowy shutdown on January 12th gave us an unexpected pause.

A highlight of the month was the Coming of Age (COA) Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser—the final push to fund our youth’s trip to Boston. We are thrilled to announce that the event was a huge success, and thanks to our community’s generosity, they reached their fundraising goal! We are incredibly proud of the COA youth and their families for their dedication, and we extend a special thank you to Francy D. for her invaluable support in planning, cooking, and securing donations.




Coming Up in February

 Sign Up for Mystery Friends!

Mystery Friends is back!

This cherished UUMAN tradition is a fun, intergenerational way to build connections through the simple act of letter-writing. Children (ages 5+), youth, and adults will be paired as Mystery Friends, exchanging letters over three weeks—**March 2, 9, and 16**—before revealing their identities at a special potluck on **March 23 at 1:00 PM**.

 Please note the date changes to better accommodate families traveling for Spring Break.

This is a wonderful opportunity to deepen relationships within our community. No gifts—just friendship!




= FRIEND??

It's True!
UUMAN's Mystery Friend is back! Can you solve the clues?

Sign up to get your very own new mystery friend and learn more about our UU heritage. UUMAN youth and adults will be paired with a mystery friend and exchange letters with clues about who they are for 3 weeks in March. Your mystery friend will then reveal their true identity March 23. Scan the QR code below or contact Lexie Brown at dre@uuman.org for more information and to sign up.



<https://uuman.breezechms.com/form/03c63c>

Sign up now!  [Mystery Friends Sign-Up](#)

MCY February Times

Lexie T. Brown
Director of Religious Education

Coming Up in February

Let's Talk About PRIDE!



UUMAN is preparing to join other metro Atlanta UU congregations in planning for Atlanta Pride 2025, and we want your input!

Join us for an internal UUMAN Pride Planning Meeting on Tuesday, February 18th, at 7 PM to discuss:

- Who is interested in participating in Pride events
- How we want to participate (parade, booth, float, etc.)
- Selecting UUMAN's 1-3 representatives for the metro-wide UU Pride planning group
- How much funding UUMAN can commit to the UU cluster fund for Pride

Date: Tuesday, February 18th

Time: 7:00 PM

Video call link: [Join Here](#)

This meeting is an opportunity to help shape UUMAN's involvement and ensure we have a strong, meaningful presence at Pride. Everyone is welcome, whether you want to march, help with planning, or just learn more!


If you have any questions, please contact Lexie T. Brown at dre@uuman.org. We hope to see you there!

Multigen Activity on February 9th!

We've added a special multigenerational activity for children and youth on Sunday, February 9th. While waiting to enjoy the Chili Cook-Off at 12 PM, kids can join in for some fun and engaging activities in Discovery Cottage. This is a great opportunity to connect, play, and make the time fly by before the chili feast begins!

Career Fair at UU Emerson – Canceled

Unfortunately, the Career Fair at UU Emerson on February 23rd has been canceled. We are awaiting updates on a possible reschedule or alternative activity. Stay tuned for more information.

That's all for now—stay warm and stay connected this February! 

February: A Month of Sundays



Life Celebrations

We want to commemorate the happy occasions in the lives of our UUMAN members and other friends of UUMAN. We are looking for Naming Ceremonies, Graduations, Marriages, Anniversaries, Retirements, and Birthdays. Please submit the information about your special day, in the month prior to the event, to membership@uuman.org.

Date	Service Description	Service Leader
2/2	<p>Doing What Needs Doing</p> <p>Many are concerned about the state of the nation, the state of the world. We have the threat of climate change, gun violence, mass incarceration, drug addiction, child labor, challenges to our democracy....the list goes on and on. What do we do about these when the problems seem so big, so pervasive, so daunting? Can anything be done? And, can we have joy as we make our way?</p>	Rev. Dave Dunn
2/9	<p>Who is the Stranger?</p> <p>How are we to treat the stranger? What do the world's religions say about this? What has been the history of immigrants and immigration in the United States? How has it changed over time? Where do we go from here?</p>	Rev. Dave Dunn
2/16	<p>Faith in a Fortune Cookie</p> <p>Can a life lesson be gleaned from a fortune cookie? Can a sermon be written from one? On the spot? Rev Dave will try. Why do this? What's the point?</p>	Rev. Dave Dunn
2/23	<p>Lesson #1 from My Time in Prison</p> <p>At the end of our weekly shifts, my fellow chaplain interns always asked "Where did you see God at work today?" How does a non-theist even begin to answer that? Join me in taking a closer look at what it means to look for God (or even Good) in "all the wrong places."</p>	Liz Martin

Date	Celebration
2/1	Kyra P. is celebrating a birthday
2/4	Elizabeth N. is celebrating a birthday
2/5	Davis D. is celebrating a birthday
	Izzy D. is celebrating a birthday
2/8	Owen P. is celebrating a birthday
2/12	Jacob C. is celebrating a birthday
2/14	Michelle & Mike L. are celebrating their anniversary.
2/15	Dan C. is celebrating a birthday
	James L. is celebrating a birthday
	Maud V. is celebrating a birthday
2/22	Riahna B. is celebrating a birthday
2/23	Liam P. is celebrating a birthday
2/28	Raffaella S. is celebrating a birthday

ABOUT THE UUMANTimes: The UUMANTimes is the newsletter of Unitarian Universalist Metro Atlanta North (UUMAN). We go live with each issue by the first Sunday of the month; deadline for submissions is typically on the 22nd of the month preceding the issue date. Please email your news articles and artwork to newsletter@uuman.org