

September 2026 • News, Worship, and Community

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Belonging at UUMAN

By Rev. Dave Dunn



First of all...a special “THANK YOU” goes out to Gus Hadorn and Michelle Liebergesell who authored the UUMAN Newsletter frontpage articles during my summer break.

Gus’s articles always inform me of the importance of the choices we make; and they inspire me to better

live my values. Michelle’s article should inspire us to continue to develop and deepen our relationship with our partner church in Mawsynjri, India. This has been a difficult task since the dissolution of the Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council (UUPCC) that took place during the pandemic. Michelle has been championing a new fundraiser to assist the Mawsynjri church in the building of a safety retaining wall.

Once again...THANK YOU to Gus and Michelle!

After our annual Ingathering Water Communion service, I led a Sunday worship service on Belonging – what it means to truly belong to this (or to any) congregation.

Back in 2001, the UUA’s Commission on Appraisal, a body of lay UUs that periodically reviews the association said that “only by making a commitment to a community can

we hope to build a community” and that membership and belonging “is not something conferred upon one person by an already extant group of ‘others,’ but a covenant among individuals to become something new (UUA Commission on Appraisal, Belonging: The Meaning of Membership, p9, 65)”

This means that a church community isn’t something you “join” but rather something that you “co-create.” UUMAN isn’t the same without you. It can’t possibly be the same without you!

It brings to mind a famous quote by the dance pioneer Martha Graham who said, “there is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening, that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and will be lost.”

I love the community we co-create here at UUMAN; and I know that there is a lot of love in this community. Yet, I also know that, as one of our hymns says, “there is more love somewhere.” This means that although we co-create the love of our community here, there is still more “somewhere” out there waiting to be found; more love out there, outside of our circle, waiting to “belong;” more love to help us become something new.

The poet Rumi says, “Sit down in this circle...Open your hands if you want to be held (Rumi, Community of the Spirit).”

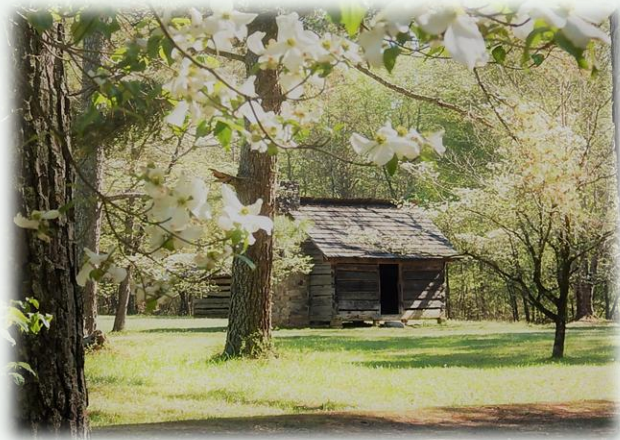
If you merely attend UUMAN, please take this opportunity to step in; open your hands, be held and co-create this community with us!

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

Dave

Volunteer to Maintain a Georgia State Park

By Martina Austin



Join us for Your State Parks Day, September 26, 2026! This is an annual event featuring volunteer opportunities for maintenance work at Georgia state parks. As part of this state-wide event, UUMAN is

hosting a trip to New Echota State Historic Site in Gordon County, about a 60-mile drive from UUMAN. New Echota was the capital of the Cherokee Nation in the Southeastern United States from 1825 until their forced removal in the late 1830s.

UUMANites will meet at 8:15 AM to carpool. Bring your gardening gloves, water, snacks, sunscreen, and bug juice (it's tick season). The necessary tools will be provided. You are not required to stay for the full day (until 3 PM), but if you do, bring a bag lunch.

We hope you'll join us!

Volunteering for Rivers Alive

By Martina Austin



Rivers Alive is an annual tradition in Roswell and sparks renewed pride in our unique riverside city. UUMAN (led by Earth Ministry) has been participating in the event for 5+ years. This year, the event is being

held on Saturday, September 19, from 9:00 am to Noon. We will work on cleaning up Hog Waller Creek again this year, and we hope you'll join us.

We will meet at Waller Park, 250 Oak Street in Roswell. Bring hats, gloves, sunscreen, and water. The event, co-hosted by Keep Roswell Beautiful and the City of Roswell, is part of a statewide campaign to clean and preserve Georgia's 70,100 miles of rivers and streams. It is a fun and rewarding way to spend a morning!

Clean ups are family friendly, but ages 5 and up, please. We can't wait for you to join us! Stay tuned - more information to follow.

Important Family Promise News

By Mike Chambers

In June, UUMAN hosted two homeless families in Discovery Cottage for three weeks, something we have done for many years. As it turns out, that was the last time we'll be hosting Family Promise families on our campus.

FP is moving toward a new model, where the families will have a permanent location while in the shelter program, instead of moving from church to church. The current transitional house, which is next to St. David's Episcopal Church in Roswell, will become the (non-rotational) shelter. Family Promise has acquired a new house in Roswell that will become the new transitional house.

We will still have opportunities to assist the families—for example, a cookout at the shelter, a Saturday pancake breakfast, buying gift cards. FP encourages us to get creative about how we can interact with the families going forward. We will still sign up for weeks where we can support them, but we will no longer be limited to summer, when Premo is not in session.

The rotational shelter program will continue for the remainder of this calendar year. The new model will take effect in January 2027.

We did it!

By Michelle Liebergesell, Partner Church Chair

Grateful shout out to everyone who contributed to our NE India Partner Church's fundraiser. We made our full \$6,216 goal for Mawsynjri's retaining wall and fence — consider it the most successful coffee hour adjacent project of the season. Thank you all!

We reached the goal of \$6,216 in August for our Partner Church in NE India. Thank you to the many people who contributed! The money will be used to build a retaining wall and fence, and UUMANites will help with the fence project when we visit the village in the Fall of 2027.

Holding Our Beliefs with Open Hands

By Joseph Lamb, Special Projects, UUMAN Board

Our Unitarian and Universalist ancestors did not build this tradition on certainty. They built it on the conviction that no one — not a bishop, not a king, not even a well-meaning preacher — has the final word on the nature of God. While not every tradition holds this value close to its practice, that conviction is a form of humility, and it is worth remembering as we form and support our own theologies today.

Consider Francis David, the Transylvanian preacher whose arguments persuaded Prince John Sigismund to issue the Edict of Torda in 1568, the first legal decree of religious toleration in Europe. David did not ask the prince to declare Unitarianism the one true faith. He asked him to protect Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Unitarians alike, because belief cannot be forced onto a conscience. That is humility in action: caring more about the freedom of every conscience than the triumph of your own.

Here is a smaller, more uncomfortable example. Many of us have heard Francis David credited with the line “we need not think alike to love alike.” It is printed in hymnals and quoted in sermons across our movement. But historians who have gone looking for the source have never found one. The phrase appears to have attached itself to David only in the twentieth century, and it closely echoes a line written by John Wesley, the Methodist founder, more than a century after David’s death. Our own tradition, it turns out, is not immune to inventing the very certainty it warns against. The humble response is not to stop quoting David, but to hold even our favorite stories loosely and correct them when the evidence asks us to do so.

The early Universalists showed a similar instinct. When delegates gathered in Winchester, New Hampshire in 1803 to write a statement of belief, they deliberately kept it short: three articles, resting on the idea that God’s nature is love and that all of humanity would ultimately be restored to holiness. Then they added something unusual for a statement of faith — a “liberty clause,” giving individual congregations room to say more, or say it differently, without breaking fellowship. They wrote a creed that assumed from the start that it did not have the complete picture.

I remember in my youth attending a Christian university that was adamant about being bold in how you declare what you believe, sometimes in a way that seemed arrogant or unmoving. It never sat right with me, and when Jehovah’s Witnesses or Mormons would come to my door, as they often did, I always had the same thought as they walked me through their detailed theological belief system. How correct does my theology have to be to inherit God’s favor, or eternal security?

Hosea Ballou, the great popularizer of American Universalism, pushed the same idea further. His Treatise on Atonement argued that the point of religion was not to secure a correct doctrine of how sinners escape punishment, but to live in humility and

reverence before a God whose nature is love. For Ballou, getting the theology “right” mattered far less than getting the posture right: approaching the sacred, and each other, without needing to win the argument.

None of this means belief doesn’t matter, or that every idea is equally sound. It means our tradition has always distinguished between conviction and certainty. We are free to believe deeply while admitting we might be wrong. We are free to build a theology while leaving room for someone else to build a different one beside it. We are free to correct our own history when we learn we got it wrong. That is not a weakness in the Unitarian and Universalist heritage. It is the whole point. Stay humble and continue the search.

Measured in Butterflies

By Gus Hadorn



What is the cost of grass? It can be measured in butterflies that no longer return. The grass lawn began as a show of luxury, aristocrats flaunting no need to grow food. The 20th century wars brought us poisons. What was done to men in the trenches could easily be done to insects, so business took a turn.

Mosquitoes for sure are a pain. That’s why God gave us bats. There once was balance to all of this. Perhaps there can be again. But clearly it looks like the monarchs will not be joining us. The mosquito guy that wants your money on a regular basis doesn’t think about butterflies; in fact he tells you his product is organic. It’s up to you to remember that cyanide and arsenic are as well. Sometimes we take the bait even when it’s obvious. That which can kill a mosquito can kill a butterfly.

Summer’s heat is much more tolerable when there is poetry in the air. There are things in this world that take us beyond ourselves, that give us a glimpse of the majesty of life. The dance of the butterfly is one of those. I want my children and yours to be struck with the wonder and awe that I have known. What we love will live on.

If there is interest, I will come again with tips for a better way.

Support Earth Ministry

September: A Month of Sundays

DATE	TOPIC	Service Leader
9/6	Blessing of the Animals Please join us in our annual Blessing of the Animals service. We will bless your furred, feathered, crawling friends in one way or another.	Rev. Dave Dunn and Liz Martin
9/13	Theology of Covenant: How Working with Unhoused Folks in Atlanta Changed Mine We often say that Unitarian Universalism is not a creedal religion, but a covenantal one. It's not too hard to see what that means within a congregational setting. What does it mean as we look outside our walls? And what does it call on us to do when we look at the unhoused people in our interdependent web?	Liz Martin
9/20	BYOB So, what is social justice, anyways? Other than a progressive buzz phrase for woke sheeple, that is. Well, lets get comfy and sit down together as arm chair philosophers of modern social justice movements and reimagine what could be rebuilt once someone puts out this dumpster fire...A how to service when no one knows what's going on or who is in charge. Bring your own bucket, please.	Social Justice Team
9/27	Beautiful Trash: It's Not Easy Being Green or There is No Planet B We see plants as green because this wavelength of light is essentially useless to the it. It is therefore reflected back to us. Beautiful trash! Beautiful plants: What would we do without them? How are they threatened? What can we do for them?	Rev. Dave Dunn

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 office@uuman.org

DATE	CELEBRATION
9/8	Rowan M. is celebrating a birthday.
9/9	Ann & Dirk B. are celebrating an anniversary of 36 years.
	William Hunter G. is celebrating a birthday.
9/10	Luc G. is celebrating a birthday.
9/15	Dan P. is celebrating a birthday.
	Jonathan N. is celebrating a birthday.
9/22	Debra & Mike B. are celebrating an anniversary of 41 years.
	Sam F. & Carolina P. are celebrating an anniversary of 26 years.
9/28	Troy V. 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 proceeding the issue date. Please email your news articles and artwork to newsletter@uuman.org