



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF LITTLE ROCK

## Monthly News & Updates

January 2026 | VOL. 75  
ISSUE 1

### Worship Services

**Jan 4: "Practicing Resistance"**

Rev. Paul is in the pulpit.

**Jan 11: Illumination Service**

This is our UUCLR annual holiday of light during the winter.

**Jan 18: "The Intersectionality of Oppressions"**

Rev. Paul is in the pulpit and the choir will be singing.

**Jan 25: "Music & Mysticism"**

Rev. Paul is in the pulpit with recorder special music.



### Our Whole Lives

After more than a year of research and discussion, UUCLR is proud to host an OWL leaders training on January 16-18 in the Mehta Wing.

Attendees include individuals from UUCLR, but also the Fayetteville UU and other organizations in need of this particular training. Once trained, we will be ready to run a K-1 and 4-6 class sometime in the spring. We are excited to share that Ginny & Dylan Ashcraft, Sarah Walker, and Brandon Murphy have stepped up to lead these sessions. More information will be shared as this program solidifies. Thank you to Zenyth Propst and the Board for leading this exciting effort.

### 10 am Forum Topics

**Jan 4: Memories & Memory**

This is a joint gathering with Forum and REConnections - an exploration of personal and collective memories, and how memories shape us as people and build community.

**Jan 11: Share the Plate - UUCLR Food Pantry**

This month we support the work of the food pantry operation which now serves McDermott Elementary. Nell Matthews will share news and updates.

**Jan 18: Photo Social Hour**

Join us on the coffee hour side of the hall - browse the many photos, share memories, and offer caption information. This is part of our 75th Anniversary events.

**Jan 25: "What's on Your Mind?"**

Hosted by Clyde Bailey

## Upcoming Events

- 1/2 Card Playing Night (6-8pm, Pehrson)
- 1/4 Book Exchange & Recycling Sunday
- 1/5 Between the Lines Book Club (7pm, Pehrson)
- 1/8 Site Ops Mtg. (12:30, Zoom)
- 1/10 IllUmination Celebration (5:30pm, Mehta)
- 1/11 IllUmination Service (11am, Sanctuary)
- 1/11 Vegetarian Potluck (Mehta)
- 1/13 Young at Heart Lunch (11:45am, Mehta)
- 1/14 Improv Games (2-4pm, Mehta)
- 1/14 Program Council Mtg. (5:15pm, Zoom/Pehrson)
- 1/16-18 OWL Training (Mehta)
- 1/20 Our House Meal Serving
- 1/20 UUCLR Board Meeting (7pm)
- 1/24 Grounds Workday (am, UUCLR)
- 1/24 Intergenerational Caring Conversation (10-12)
- 1/25 LUUnch Out! (location TBD)
- 1/30 Short Story Discussion Group (Noon, Pehrson)
- 1/31 Parents Night Out

## Outer Circle Deadline

NOTE: The deadline for submitting information to the next Outer Circle is January 28th.



## Young at Heart Luncheon

Save the date, Tuesday, January 14th for our next Young at Heart gathering in the Mehta wing! Lunch will be prepared by our volunteers coordinated by Joanne Kriehn, beginning at 11:45. We plan to eat soups and sandwiches. If you can come earlier to help setup and/or stay after to help cleanup, we'd appreciate your service.

Our program will consist of a discussion lead by Scott Lee and Jerry Blackburn on the value, surprises, and findings of genealogy research. Come join us!

Selma Blackburn, coordinator

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**Next Board Mtg:**

**January 20th**

**7pm, Pehrson**

**JOIN VIA ZOOM**

View the online calendar to see times and locations of all the upcoming events - [www.uuclr.org](http://www.uuclr.org).

## First Friday Card Nights

Monthly card playing nights are continuing in to the new year. Look for these usually on first Fridays from 6-8pm in the Pehrson Room. All ages are welcome, as are BYO snacks and beverages. Come play with us!





## AARP Tax Service Resumes

From January 29th until April 10th, our friends at AARP will be using the Mehta Wing each Thursday and Friday to provide free tax prep for anyone with a simple filing. These services are available to all ages!

## Helping Our Neighbors

The McDermott food pantry has been in operation since August. In that time, over 80 families have signed up and there are about 45 active participants. Not everyone comes each week, so when a family shows up to collect a bag, we know that they really needed the food that week.



When we lost the big Pulaski County grant in the fall, I was very worried. But because of the help from others and the grants we did receive, we have managed to get through the end of the year in good shape. We are cautiously optimistic that we can continue to enroll more families and will make it to the end of the school year. Going forward, there are plans to have a community garden and a free 'farmers market'.

The McDermott food pantry is the only in-school pantry in the school district. The reason why the UUCLR-supported food pantry has continued when other school pantries have had to close is because of the generous support of this church community. All money collected during January for the food pantry and for Second Sunday will help ensure that we can continue.

*Contributed by Nell Matthews*



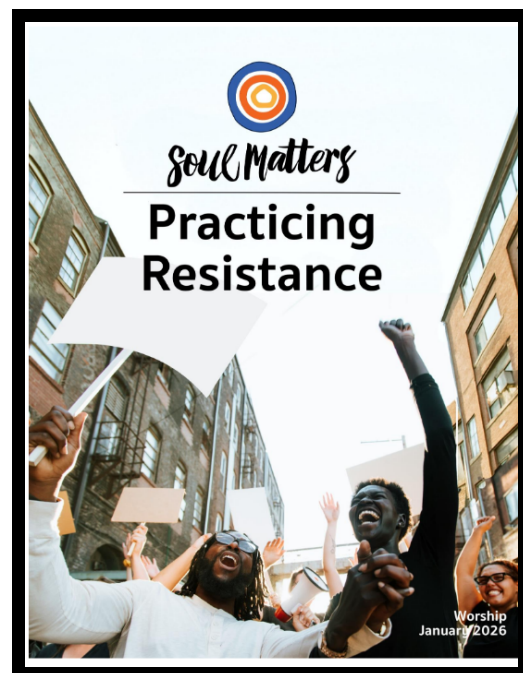
**Intergenerational  
Conversation on Caring**  
Hosted by the Lay Ministry Team

**January 24th  
10am-Noon**

**Mehta Wing**  
RSVP to Rev. Paul

This will be the first in a series of events. The timing and frequency of them will be discussed in this initial session.

## January's Worship Theme:



## REFLECTIONS: “Another Child in Palestine”

Last month I spoke about the social and political complexities of life in the “Holy Lands” of southwest Asia. I decided to focus on the testimonies of one now-41-year-old child of Palestine, the author and scholar Tareq Baconi, as told in his new memoir, *Fire in Every Direction*.



In my research for that sermon, I learned about another child of Palestine whose story, in the end, I chose not to include in that morning's service, but was very much in my mind and on my heart as I prepared it: that of the cartoonist, Naji Al-Ali, who created the character “Handala,” shown here. Handala is named after a plant indigenous to Palestine, a perennial with deep roots (that therefore grows back tenaciously when cut), and that bears bitter fruit. Al-Ali first drew Handala in 1969, and by 1973 the character had taken its now-familiar appearance. Very often, Handala is simply present in a cartoon, striking this pose: his back to the reader, his hands clasped behind his back.



Of this character, Al-Ali wrote:

“The child Handala is my signature. I drew him as a child who is not beautiful; his hair is like the hair of a hedgehog who uses his thorns as a weapon. Handala is not a fat, happy, relaxed, or pampered child. He is barefooted like the refugee camp children, and he is an icon that protects me from making mistakes. Even though he is rough, his hands are clasped behind his back and he turns his back as a sign of rejection at a time when solutions are presented to us the American way.”

Starting in 1975, Al-Ali began drawing cartoons depicting the complexities of life as a Palestinian refugee, responding to current events over the next dozen years. The historical background for those complexities included:

- 1947: UN partition of Israel and Palestine
- 1948: Israel's War of Independence / Palestine's Nakba (catastrophe)
- 1967: the so-called Six-Day War (it lasted 5 days, but was named after the biblical six days of creation – Israel occupied Palestine, the Sinai peninsula and the Golan Heights)
- 1973: Yom Kippur War / Ramadan War / October War (Egypt and Syria tried to retake territory occupied by Israel in 1967)
- 1978: Camp David Accords (Israel returned the Sinai peninsula to Egypt)

In July of 1987, Naji Al-Ali was shot in the neck as he walked to his office in west London, and died a month later. A few months after that, the First Intifada began.

Handala lives on, in graffiti – particularly on the walls Israel has built around Palestinian neighborhoods to enforce its official policy of segregation. Al-Ali wrote, “Handala was born ten years old, and he will always be ten years old. At that age, I left my homeland, and when he returns, Handala will still be ten, and then he will start growing up. The laws of nature do not apply to him. Things will become normal again when the homeland returns. I presented him to the poor and named him Handala as a symbol of bitterness. At first, he was a Palestinian child, but his consciousness developed to have a national and then a global and human horizon. He is a simple yet tough child, and this is why people adopted him and felt that he represents their consciousness.”

Perhaps what we are hearing today from our younger generations of Americans is that global and human consciousness at long last breaking through the noise of a conflict no more ancient than the last world war.

# Third Spaces & Building Community

In last month's edition, Board Chair, Laurie Smith Prud'homme wrote about an energetic and forward-thinking discussion had by the board to prioritize intergenerational community through a concept called Third Space.

Board member Ginny Ashcraft had a great shorthand explanation for the guidelines and expectations for third spaces:

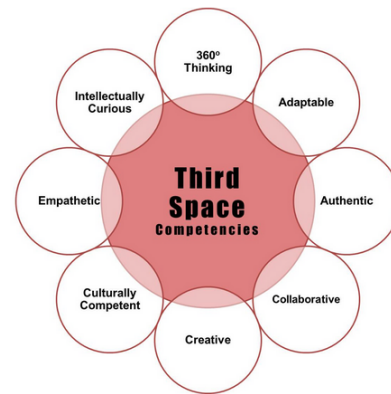
1. We aren't required to bring anything other than ourselves.
2. We aren't required to prepare anything ahead of time.
3. Only minimal cleanup is required when we leave.

When a person decides to venture out of their home in search of community, it can be hard to find spaces that don't require something of you - work, stores, and restaurants all have an exchange of money or resources. Many social events and spaces have a ticket price or entry fee.

Other than the public library and outdoor spaces, our society has very few places that are open and inclusive spots which can encourage community development. The concept of Third Space has risen in popularity in recent years as a response.

At UUCLR, we have a unique opportunity to intentionally utilize our facilities with this concept in mind. Recent successes of creating this sort of Third Space include the monthly card playing night initiated by Zenyth Propst and the monthly improv games initiated by Rudy Rieple.

While these events do need someone to lead or anchor the event or activity, they can be relatively simple to initiate. UUCLR's multiple channels for communication can be utilized for spreading the word once a time and date have been confirmed. Do you have an idea of a way we can build and grow our community through these sorts of activities?!



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## Board President's Message

Happy New Year! I feel like I need to take a few days to breathe following our beautiful and busy month of December at UUCLR. Thank you to everyone who participated and volunteered and attended our services and events. What a joy to be together in community. We have some wonderful plans for the next few months that I hope you will enjoy. For today, however, I am asking you to take a moment to breathe...and reflect...and appreciate the work you have done to build this beloved community. I always hope my January's will be a time of quiet and contemplation – and sometimes they are! I want to be present in the moment and with each of you to stop and say thank you. We needed each other so many times during the last year amidst all of the stress and difficulties. And we loved and supported each other through the hard times.

One of my favorite teachers and authors, T. Thorn Coyle, wrote a piece last month about being “tangled in life” as a metaphor for interdependence. They said, “We are all dependent on so many networks that we could not survive without. We rely on the trees for oxygen. We rely on the land for food. We rely on the rivers for water. We rely on the person who collects the garbage. We rely on the ones who care for us when we are ill... And all of these others rely on us, as well... Today, no matter how you are helping strengthen this web of life, I applaud and thank you. Every person fed. Every offer to lift a burden or build something new. Every hand held to protect those in danger. Every child taught and floor cleaned... One thousand utterings of thanks.”

Thorn's words resonated deeply with me. They perfectly described my feelings about our beloved UUCLR community and the world we are working so hard to create each day. Thank you to each of you for showing up and loving each other and doing the work to make our world a safe, loving, accepting, supportive and compassionate place for everyone. May this year be filled with light and love, with peace and acceptance, with patience and endurance for the work ahead.

With love, Laurie Smith Prud'homme

## December Board Meeting Summary

Following approval of the minutes, we heard reports from Rev Paul, Finance Committee, Program Council, Site Operations Council, and Executive Committee. We reviewed reports from the ad hoc committees including Outdoor Spaces, Governing Docs, Technology, and OWL Feasibility.

In old business, Debbie updated the board on the 75th church anniversary events.

In new business, we discussed the spring pledge drive and approved designating the Christmas Eve offertory for the Helping Hand fund. The board had a lengthy and productive discussion about supporting other communities of faith following acts of violence. Marvin Schwartz and Rev Paul agreed to write a letter of support to the Jewish Federation of Arkansas following the recent shootings Australia. The board agreed to consider any needs for response at each board meeting moving forward.

The next board meeting will be **Tuesday, January 20th, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Smith Prud'homme, President



### 2026 UUCLR Buffalo River Trip

We are looking forward to the Memorial Day Buffalo River trip in 2026. UUCLR has been making this trip for over 40 years.

The group will begin to gather Friday, May 22 in or around the Buffalo Point Campground. There will (hopefully!) be a group floating the Buffalo River on Saturday, May 23 between Dillard's Ferry and Rush Landing. There will be a pancake breakfast Saturday morning, a potluck Saturday night, campfire singing and music, a spiritual service Sunday morning, and plenty of time for enjoying friends and family. The trip wraps up on Memorial Day, May 25. It's not necessary to attend every day of the trip.

If you like sleeping outdoors, camping is available at two group sites. Email Rebecca ([uuchurchlr@gmail.com](mailto:uuchurchlr@gmail.com)) to reserve your camping spot. There are restrooms nearby and showers within a short drive.

If you like sleeping indoors, contact Buffalo Point Concession for lodging in the park (870-449-6206) or the Buffalo Point Inn for lodging right outside the park (870-404-8904). And there are many other lodging options nearby to choose from!

Please contact Zenyth ([zenyth@msn.com](mailto:zenyth@msn.com)) for more information.

## Music Ministry Sign Up

We have so many talented artists in our congregation and many of you have expressed interest in helping with the music ministry from time to time. Kendi has created a form which will build a contact registry for the music ministry. This way, we can reach out as opportunities arise.

If you have musical gifts and talents that you would be willing to share with our congregation, please take a moment to click the link and fill out this form.

Thank you!

[Music Ministry Form](#)



Children contribute a Yule play during the December 21st service with support from Fin Judkins, Sarah Hyndman, Stephanie Webb, and Chalina Mora.



## UUCLR is a Welcoming Congregation

Each of us has worth and dignity, and that worth includes our gender and our sexuality. As Unitarian Universalists (UUs), we not only open our doors to people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, we value diversity of sexuality and gender and see it as a spiritual gift. We create inclusive religious communities and work for LGBTQ justice and equity as a core part of who we are. All of who you are is sacred. All of who you are is welcome.

## 8th Principle News

Our January meeting will be on January 26th at 5pm in the Perhson Room.

We will discuss outreach plans for February, Black History month. A celebration will take place at McDermott February 20th and UUCLR has been invited to have a table. This will need volunteers!

Everyone is invited to join our discussion on January 26th. Bring your ideas on ways we can interact in our community to promote interracial understanding and inclusion.

In your service,  
Margot Cameron,

[Learn More about the 8th Principle](#)



Kendi and Jaime Jensen-Loving at the service in celebration of Kwanzaa on Sunday, December 28th.

## Short Stories Discussion Group

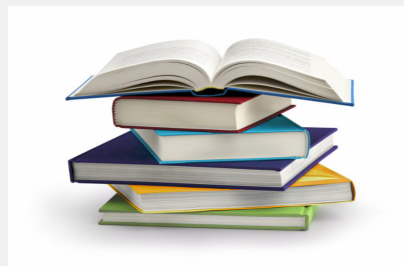
**Story:** "Bears Among the Living" by Kevin Moffett

**Date:** Friday, January 30th

**Time:** Noon

**Location:** Pehrson Room

If you would like to join via zoom, please contact the office. The link is the same each month.



## Free Symphony Concert

The ASO Community Orchestra will hold a free concert on Jan 18, 7 PM, at Calvary Baptist Church in their sanctuary, located in the Heights.

This orchestra is made up of non-professional musicians including UUCLR's Nell Matthews (horn), Chris Thomson (trombone), and Linda VanBlaricom (violin). The program includes the *Hansel and Gretel Overture* (Humperdinck), the *Bacchanale* from *Samson and Deliah* (Saint-Saëns), and three beloved arias from operas by Puccini, Verdi, and Offenbach. Please do come.

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## Unitarian Universalism Demands Eco-Socialism: Faith, Climate, and the End of Capitalism

Thursday, January 8th @ 7pm (Zoom)

*Sponsored by UUs for a Just Economic Community*

The pursuit of endless growth, profit, and private ownership has driven ecosystems to total collapse, radically deepened global inequality, and has placed every living being in peril.

Ecosocialism offers an alternative. It is a political and economic philosophy that integrates ecological sustainability and social justice, recognizing that environmental destruction and social inequality share the same roots. Ecosocialism calls for pooling the resources of society to meet the needs of both people and planet, creating a world grounded in collective care, democratic control, and balance with Earth.

[Find details and registration link here.](#)



*From our friends at UUVC...*

### Hot Springs Village Events:

**Pickle Ball:** Seeking new coordinator. Contact Dane Nielsen at 501-915-4450

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**Friday Golf:** 18-Hole Golf 8:00 - 1:00, AS WEATHER PERMITS. Contact Tom Tirrell, 501-915-2436.

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**Reiki Circle:** 9:00 - 11:00 a.m. the 2nd Friday of the month in Room 2. Contact Sunny Lofton 916 316-1798.

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**Meditation Group (Sangha):** Saturdays 10:00 - Noon in the Sanctuary. All UUVC members and friends are welcomed. No experience necessary. Contact Toby Hamilton 405-919-6253.



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### CUUPS Class

Throughout 2025, a group met regularly exploring a Paganism 101 curriculum. As this class comes to a close, look for a new regular meeting time, seasonal events, and other ways to connect to each other and the earth through these ancient practices.



## **Photo Social—Jan. 18th @ Forum**

The Mehta Wing will be a busy place on Sunday, January 18th as it hosts our regular events as well as our 3-day OWL training. Forum will be held on the coffee hour side of Thomson Hall. Tables with photos from across the decades will be displayed with room for people to write in caption details. “Do you know the who, what, where, or when of this image?” If so, please contribute to the collective captioning project which is a part of celebrating our 75th Anniversary!

## **Foodbank Volunteer Opportunity - Feb. 3rd**

Bring the family to show them the value of helping others in our community at the monthly Friends & Family Night event at the Arkansas Foodbank. 20 volunteers from UUCLR are invited to volunteer in the Volunteer Center, where donated food products are sorted, inspected and repacked for distribution to a network of agency partners in our 33 county service area.

Typical volunteer projects include preparing backpack kits for children in schools, making boxes filled with senior friendly food. Sorting, weighing, bagging, and boxing donated food items such as produce, breads, canned goods, packaged foods, and drinks. The Foodbank guidelines say that volunteers should be able to stand for extended periods of time and lift 30-40 pounds, but talk to Zenyth if you have concerns about this. There is usually a role suitable for everyone!

**When:** Tuesday, February 3 from 6 pm to 8 pm

**Location:** Arkansas Foodbank

4301 West 65th Street, Little Rock, AR 72209

**Dress Code:** Close-toed shoes are required at all times in the Volunteer Operations Center.

**Age requirements:** Volunteers must be at least eight (8) years of age to work in our warehouse. Volunteers 8-15 years old must be accompanied by an adult. Volunteers 16-18 years old do not require an adult to accompany them to volunteer in our warehouse.

Please [RVSP HERE](#) if you plan to participate. Email Zenyth (zenythp@msn.com) if you have questions.

These events are being coordinated in honor of UUCLR's 75th Anniversary Celebration.

Have an idea to celebrate in a different way? YAY!

Please contact the office or Debbie Goolsby to get it in motion.

## Are you getting all the news you need?

We have several ways of communicating!

Friday Email Blast  
Sunday Morning Email Blast  
Sunday Order of Service Insert  
Bulletin Boards (Thomson & RE Wing)  
Outer Circle - Monthly Newsletter  
New! - Parent GroupMe Chat  
Website - [www.uuclr.org](http://www.uuclr.org)  
Facebook - /UUCLR



**So many beautiful people!** If you'd like to take a photo for your directory listing, please contact the office. Thank you, Membership Team, for your work to keep our records up to date!

### January Birthdays

January 01 Mary Lowe Kennedy  
January 05 Marilyn Christian  
January 05 Blaire Gradney  
January 06 Judy Rickard  
January 06 Gene Slothour-Hudnall  
January 08 Valerie Pearsall  
January 09 Barbara Gojer  
January 10 Ash Caringer  
January 15 Fred Roberson  
January 16 Carey Brent James

January 18 Janet Stewart  
January 18 Jake Tidmore  
January 24 Ashley Reyes  
January 24 Virginia St Ana  
January 26 Kater Reynolds  
January 27 Julie Evans  
January 28 Beryl Rushefsky  
January 28 Grant Zaragoza  
January 30 Robert Crick

*See a birthday that is missing or incorrect?*

***Please let Membership or the office know!***

**CHURCH ADDRESS:**

1818 Reservoir Road  
Little Rock, AR 72227

**WEBSITE:**

www.uuclr.org

**OFFICE HOURS:**

Tuesday-Friday, 8am-1pm

**OFFICE CONTACT:**

Rebecca Roetzel  
Church Administrator  
(501) 225-1503  
uuchurchlr@gmail.com



**MINISTER:**

Rev. Paul Beedle  
Contact for appointment.  
(504) 458-2254  
revpaulbeedle@gmail.com

**DIRECTOR OF RE:**

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dre@uuclr.org

**MUSIC DIRECTOR:**

Kendi Jensen-Loving

**AV DIRECTOR:**

Chad Loucks

**WORSHIP ARTS TEAM LEADS:**

Margot Cameron & Laurie Smith Prud'homme

**FACILITIES TEAM LEAD:**

Michael Roetzel

**GROUNDS TEAM LEAD:**

Joanne Kriehn

**MEMORIAL WOODLANDS:**

Margaret McLellan

**CARING TEAM LEAD:**

Sue McDonald

**FELLOWSHIP TEAM LEAD:**

Kater Reynolds

**MEMBERSHIP LEAD:**

Lisa Brents

**FORUM COORDINATOR:**

Jan Bowen

**RE-QUESTORS COORDINATOR:**

Joe Meehan

**RECONNECTIONS COORDINATOR:**

Zenyth Propst

**CUUPS COORDINATOR:**

Stephanie Webb

**COMMUNICATIONS & RENTALS:**

Rebecca Roetzel

**HEALTH & SAFETY TEAM LEADS:**

Phil Peters & Sherman James

**TECHNOLOGY TEAM LEAD:**

Scott Lee



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