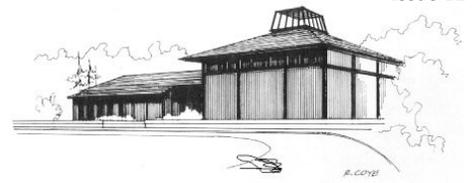


May Memorial Unitarian Universalist Society Newsletter

December 2025
Volume 88
Issue 12



We embrace all spiritual journeys and encourage service as we build a more loving and just world

Sunday worship service 10:30am



I used to love the winter holiday season.

For Thanksgiving, my extended family would all travel to my aunt's farm in Ohio, a place that is very important to me. I had nine cousins and we would build mazes in the hay mow and play games in the barn and generally just hang out. Writing this now, I realize that playing with my cousins was the only time I played with other kids when I was not picked on or made fun of. At Christmas, all of us would travel to Indianapolis to spend the day together at Aunt Ann's house. As kids we would play games together. We played family bingo and ate cheese ball and puppy chow to our heart's content.

As we grew into adults, the magic faded and the holidays changed for us. When my mother died of COVID in 2020, I decided that I would no longer be traveling to see family for the holidays because of the way most of my extended family treated her in her lifetime. I was not able to see this until I was an adult. This changed the way I see holidays. Around the holiday time I now find myself withdrawn and melancholy. My therapist recently named it grief from the loss of my family and the loss of so many other things around this holiday time. That feels right to me.

I told my therapist that I want to work on not feeling this way every year, and she reminded me that it takes time and helped me to name some of the feelings I am having around this season. And yet, the sadness still exists, and I'm okay to feel those feelings and allow the sadness and grief to run its course.

My husband Isaac and I have several traditions that I love. Each year we create an ornament for each other. The rule is that it has to be about something that happened that year. In 2018, the year I began at MMUUS, he made me a small ornament-size replica of the front of our church building! This year, I made him a fabric ornament scene from one of the photos we took of the Aurora Borealis in Iceland in March. We also love going and cutting down our own Christmas tree the weekend after Thanksgiving and then decorating with all of the ornaments we have made and collected over the years. Those memories give me so much joy.

My loves, here is what I hope for you this season. If there is sadness and grief for you, feel it. Exist with it. You don't have to feel a particular way for the holidays because you think you're supposed to. And if there is joy for you around the season, feel that too! Find the magic piece of the holidays that makes you come alive and share it with everyone you can! There is no right or wrong way to do the holiday season. The important thing is that you do whatever feels right and is best for you. Take care of yourselves during this time in whatever way makes the most sense. And always know that I'm here to listen if you need someone to do just that.

I love you,

Rev. Jo




DECEMBER **Worship Calendar**

12/7	Hanging of The Greens	Rev. Jo VonRue and Director of Religious Education Stacy Sceiford
12/14	Music Sunday	Director of Music Glenn Kime and Worship Associate David Mendelsohn
12/21	The Light That Multiplies: Learning Resilience from Jewish Traditions	Rev. Jo VonRue and Worship Associate Tosca Bruno-van Vijfeijken
12/21 8pm	Winter Solstice Service	Rev. Jo VonRue and Worship Associate Karen Sgarlata
12/24 6pm	Christmas Eve/No Rehearsal Pageant	Director of Religious Education and Rev. Jo VonRue
12/24 8pm	Defiant Hope: A Christmas Eve Celebration	Rev. Jo VonRue
12/28	TBD	Rev. Jo Cleveland and Worship Associate Karen Sgarlata



<https://zoom.us/j/95274927371?pwd=H5pJFsXMxCMCfJlOwupV326HUrh1Fo.1>



Meeting ID: 952 7492 7371

Passcode: 210281

One tap mobile

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First Sunday Food Collection

Remember that each First Sunday we will do a special collection during worship when the children come forward for children's time to collect food for Gethsemane. Please be sure to bring a non-perishable food item with you if you are able. Our donations will go to our partners and family at Gethsemane United Methodist Church food pantry.

May Memorial UU Society

ART
GALLERY

December Artist

Amelia Krouse

Our December artist is Landscape painter, Amelia Krouse. Amelia has always been fascinated by the natural world and she is specifically interested in how the natural landscapes we see can be depicted. She states that while everyone may see the same scene, our individual perspectives change how we interpret it. She often finds herself focusing on light and color, and how our focus changes as things get farther away. With many of these pieces, you'll notice that she had the viewer focusing on the ground details directly in front of them. This is because she enjoys depicting both the far away background impressions, as well as the close-up details of the viewer's immediate surroundings. We hope you enjoy seeing the seasons through Amelia's eyes and hand.

Hanging of The Greens!

Sunday December 7
after service

Join us for this family friendly event!

Dress in Festive Clothes

Fun for All Ages

Hot Chocolate
Tea
Ornament Making!
Coffee
Sunday Lunch!
Cookies

HISTORY CORNER



In this newsletter article we address another question that arose after the Oct. 5 service celebrating the 60th anniversary of the dedication of our building and organ.

What happened to the stained-glass windows that were in the James Street church?

When the James Street church was razed in 1964, nearly all of the stained-glass windows were also demolished. Most of the windows honored past ministers (including our second minister and namesake, Rev. Samuel May) or church leaders/members. Before the windows were destroyed, attempts were made to contact relatives of the people who were honored, but only one window was preserved.

The window that was saved was the most valuable one and the only one designed by Louis Comfort Tiffany. It is known as “Tiffany Palms” or “The New Jerusalem.” As it honored Edward Judson, an active member of the church and friend of Rev. Calthrop (our third minister), it is also referred to as the Judson window. That window is now housed at the Everson Museum.

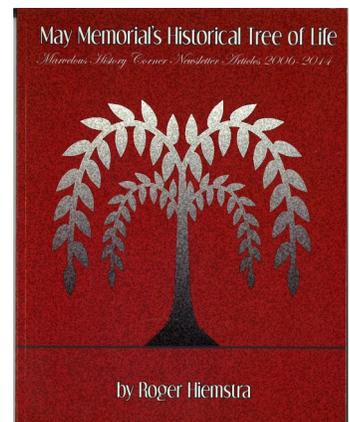
There are two articles about the Tiffany window in Roger Hiemstra’s (2016) softcover red book called *May Memorial’s Historical Tree of Life* (pp. 68-69 & 69-70). Another article (on pp.104-105) describes all ten of the stained-glass windows and tells who each one honored. It also gives the estimated value of each window in 1927 and in 2012 when the article was written. Colored photographs of all May Memorial’s stained-glass windows can be found at <http://history.mmuus.org/windows.html>.

Hiemstra’s (2016) book (shown in the picture accompanying this article) is a compilation of many articles published in May Memorial’s monthly newsletter during the time when he was chair of the history committee. Everyone who has signed our membership book recently should have received a copy of his fascinating book.

The current committee welcomes questions and discussions about May Memorial’s rich history. Look for us in the social hall during coffee hour or email us at history@mmuus.org.

Mary Louise Edwards & Kent Lindstrom

MMUUS History Committee, history@mmuus.org





Community, Conversations, Connections with Rev. Jo



Democracy in Action: Building Community Power & Resilience

The times call for more than hope, they call for skills. Join Rev. Jo VonRue, and Rev Douglas Taylor as well as UUs from multiple cities for this powerful 6-part monthly series, on 2nd Tuesdays.

The next session will be on **Tuesday December 9 6:30-8pm** via Zoom.

Learn: Strategic Action Design • Making Sense of Our Moment • Bridge Building Across Difference • Mutual Aid Essentials • Interrupting Violence & Building Peace • Scenario Planning Workshop

Whether you're a seasoned activist or just getting started, these workshops will equip you with practical tools for the challenges ahead. Our communities need people prepared to act with wisdom, courage, and love. Please contact office@mmuus.org to register.

Join us in building the future we need.



Soul Matters
SHARING CIRCLE

The next Soul Matters Sharing Circle will be **December 14th** at 12:30pm in the Teenz Room.

If you are interested in joining the group please contact the office to get on the distribution list. You'll receive a monthly reminder with the reading materials for the month.



Religious Education is sponsoring First Sunday Lunch on December 7th which is also our multigenerational "Hanging of the Greens" worship service and event to decorate the church for the holidays.

If you are able to help, we are looking for donations of \$10 to purchase pizzas, and veggie and fruit trays. We are also looking for volunteers to bring a few desserts and chips. Katie Rippentrop is collecting donations, if you have any questions please reach out 815-520-2532.

Donations can be made by Venmo (@Katherine-Rippentrop), Cash App (\$KatieRippentrop), or cash to Katie.



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|---------------------------------|-----------------|--|
| Minister | Rev. Jo VonRue | ministerjev@gmail.com |
| Director of Religious Education | Stacy Sceiford | stacymaydre@gmail.com |
| Director of Music | Glenn Kime | gkimeorganist@gmail.com |
| Board President | Peter McClure | peterrogermcclure@gmail.com |
| Book Keeper | Leslie Dendy | lesliedendy@yahoo.com |
| Finance | Jennifer Newman | mamaslash@twcny.rr.com |
| Church Office | Teri Coon | office@mmuus.org |

CNY Interfaith Sanctuary Coalition presents Welcoming the Stranger

“Welcoming the Stranger: What do our faith traditions teach and call us to do” will be presented 7 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 2 at May Memorial Unitarian Universalist Society, 3800 E Genesee St., Syracuse. Religious leaders from the Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions will present their perspectives on this important topic for our times. The forum, sponsored by the CNY Interfaith Sanctuary Coalition, is free and open to the public.

Special music will be provided by The Cadleys, recipients of the 2023 Syracuse Area Music Award (SAMMY) for Best Americana Album.

Three local Faith Leaders will share perspectives from the Abrahamic Traditions:

- Jim Brule will share from the Jewish tradition,
- David Pasinski will share from the Christian tradition,
- Magda Bayoumi will share from the Islamic tradition.

A question and answer session will follow the presentations.

The event will conclude with an interfaith Litany and musical selections by The Cadleys.

All are Welcome!

**VOLUNTEERS
NEEDED**

Coffee Hour Hosts

Welcome folks, pour coffee, offer treats, and share smiles.

Sign up [here](#) or email the office.

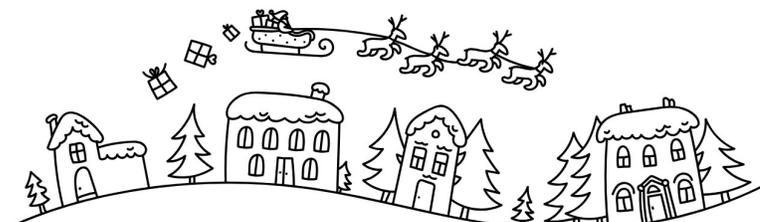
Ushers and Greeters

There are still plenty of dates available and we will have some special opportunities for usher/greeters in December for our Christmas eve services, you'll find those dates & times [here](#)

UPCOMING
Events

These are events happening in the church that are open to anyone to attend

<u>Day</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
Tuesday	12/2	Tai Chi	3pm	Social Hall
		Interfaith Sanctuary Coalition	7pm	Sanctuary
Wednesday	12/3	Vespers	8pm	Zoom only
Thursday	12/4	Tai Chi	3pm	Social Hall
		Depression Support Group	4:30pm	Memorial Room
Friday	12/5	Syracuse Gay and Lesbian Chorus	7pm	Sanctuary
Saturday	12/6	Syracuse Gay and Lesbian Chorus	2pm	Sanctuary
Sunday	12/7	Hanging of the Greens	After service	
		Sunday lunch	After hanging of the greens	
Monday	12/8	Twisted Sisters	7pm	Teenz
Tuesday	12/9	Tai Chi	3pm	Social Hall
Wednesday	12/10	Vespers	8pm	Zoom only
Thursday	12/11	Tai Chi	3pm	Social Hall
		Depression Support Group	4:30pm	Memorial Room
Sunday	12/14	Soul Matters	12:30pm	Teenz
Tuesday	12/16	Writers Group	10am	Teenz
		Tai Chi	3pm	Social Hall
Wednesday	12/17	Vespers	8pm	Zoom only
Thursday	12/18	Tai Chi	3pm	Social Hall
		Depression Support Group	4:30pm	Memorial Room
Sunday	12/21	Winter Solstice Service	8pm	Sanctuary
Wednesday	12/24	No Rehearsal Pageant	6pm	Sanctuary
		Defiant Hope: A Christmas Eve Celebration	8pm	Sanctuary
Sunday	12/28	UUIP - Crafting group	12:15pm	Teenz



Announcement of MMUUS as Ally to CNY Solidarity

At the recommendation of the Democracy Action Team (DAT), May Memorial is now considered an allied organization of CNY Solidarity. The Board of Trustees at May Memorial voted to go forward with our listing as an allied group with the CNY Solidarity Coalition (<https://www.cnysolidarity.org/>) because of the alignment of their actions and goals with our Unitarian Universalist principles. Other allies include:

- The Syracuse Peace Council
- The Workers' Center of Central NY
- The Central NY Area Labor Federation
- Syracuse Cultural Workers
- Urban Jobs Task Force of Syracuse (UJTFS)
- Syracuse Immigrant Refugee Defense Network (SIRDN)

The CNY Solidarity pledge is to:

- tear down the walls that divide and impoverish us;
- oppose any effort to register, detain, deport, or attack our neighbors;
- provide refuge for those in danger or need; and
- protect our water, air, and land as our kin.

The DAT and Board felt that these are important goals and that affiliation with these groups can be a force multiplier for many issues that May Memorial members hold dear. This is not to say that CNY Solidarity speaks for May Memorial or that we agree with all positions taken by them or their affiliates. We are an independent ally. This commitment serves us and them to better coordinate support for one another on issues that are important to us. This partnership can also help MMUUS members connect with diverse activists and perspectives, deepening understanding and resilience for long-term justice work. The members of the CNY Solidarity Coalition voted unanimously to accept May Memorial as a registered ally.

If you have any questions or concerns about this Board action, please speak to members of the Board executive team, Peter McClure, Amanda Perrine, or David Mendelsohn.



[Maggie's Wake](#) on Friday, December 12 @ 8pm.

Please visit the FOLKUS PROJECT website for details and tickets (folkus.org)

Christmas Eve Services - December 24, 2025

We invite you to celebrate the birth of hope with us this Christmas Eve!

We're offering two worship services, each with its own spirit and style:

6:00 PM - Family Friendly No Rehearsal Christmas Pageant

Bring the whole family for our beloved no-rehearsal Christmas pageant! Children are invited to help tell this Christian story from a UU perspective just as it unfolds, no preparation needed, just willing hearts and joyful spirits. This lively service is filled with singing, and wonder, and concludes with our candlelight singing of "Silent Night."

A note about our 6:00 PM service: We've noticed attendance at our early service has declined in recent years, and we want to hear from you. This Christmas Eve will serve as a trial run to help us discern the best way to celebrate this tradition moving forward. Should we continue the pageant on Christmas Eve at 6 PM, or might it thrive better on the Sunday morning before Christmas? Your presence and feedback will help shape this decision, so please join us if this service speaks to your family.

8:00 PM - Contemplative Candlelight Service "Defiant Hope: A Christmas Eve Celebration"

Our later service offers a quieter, more reflective space to encounter the Christmas story. Through music, words, and reflection, we'll gather around the theme of choosing hope as a radical act of resistance. A reminder of who we are called to be and why our witness matters now more than ever. This service includes a homily, some readings, and ends with candlelight and song.

Both services are open to all. Come as you are, and bring someone who needs to experience hope this season.

Book Communion - January 25th

Bring ONE book that means something to you. Not the stack you're clearing out, just one favorite. A book that changed you, made you laugh, or helped you see the world differently.

During worship, we'll share in a Book Communion, exchanging books with each other as a sacred act of connection. You'll go home with a new story, and your favorite book will be in someone else's hands.

The service will explore education as liberation and tackle the rise of book bans across the country. In a time when people are trying to control what we read, we'll remember that free people read free books.

What's the one book you want to share?

2nd Saturday SoUUp & Soul

We're starting something new, and I hope you'll join us.

Beginning on the second Saturday in **January (that's January 11)**, we'll gather monthly for soup, conversation, and real connection. We'll share a simple meal together, and then we'll spend time in intentional structured conversation, getting to know each other in ways that go deeper than our usual Sunday morning hellos.

This is another way for us to be intentional about building the kind of community where we actually know each other's stories, hopes, and struggles. Where we can be ourselves and feel seen.

All are welcome. Come hungry. Come curious. Come ready to connect.

When: Second Saturday of the month, 5-7 PM (first gathering January 11).

Please bring a slow cooker or pot of soup if you are able (but not required), or some bread or crackers, but we are going to stick with just soup for the main meal.

Please also bring a place serving for yourself.

May Memorial UU Society Giving Tree

We will once again be donating gifts to households that are receiving services from Syracuse Immigrant and Refugee Defense Network



This year will be quite different than in the past.

We will not be buying toys/clothes for the children since both the collection of information and organization of items is labor intensive. The

workers are overextended due to all that has been happening with ICE & CBP. We will be giving holiday stockings to each of the children and Visa gift cards (\$50-\$60) to the adults.

Watch the eblast for more information.

Questions? Contact Julie Daniel: jdanielyoga@gmail.com or 315-729-8179 (call/text)

To benefit SIRDN Syracuse Immigrant and Refugee Defense Network



Holiday Office Hours

Thurs Dec 25 - Closed

Mon Dec 29 - Closed

Tues Dec 30- Closed

Wed Dec 31 - Closed

Thurs Jan 1 - Closed

Sun Jan 4- Closed

Office is always closed every Friday and Saturday



Simply Christmas

Join the choir for a performance of Benjamin Britten's "Ceremony of Carols". We are joined by Deete Bunn on harp for a service of seasonal music.

Sunday December 14th at 10:30am

May Memorial Unitarian Universalist Society

3800 East Genesee Street
Syracuse, NY 13214
315.446.8920
office@mmuus.org



Office Hours:

Mon - Thurs: 9am-2pm (other times by appointment only)

Days off are Friday and Saturday

Contact us:

office@mmuus.org

315-446-8920

