

TAPESTRY

A Magazine for All Peoples UU

September 2025



Photo by Rob Kingsolver

Editor's Note

Early in my life as a professor, I was challenged to meet all the deadlines, finish all the grading, attend all the end-of-year ceremonies, and file all the reports that came due every April, right at the hectic end of the academic year. Once, on the afternoon of April 30, I realized that sweet April -- my favorite time to be in Kentucky -- had slipped by me without notice. Among all my to-do lists, meeting schedules, lectures and laboratory work, I had totally neglected to take a walk in the park, to smell fresh-cut grass, to hear a bird call, or to enjoy the brief but exuberant appearance of woodland wildflowers. To salvage a fraction of that last April day, I jumped up from my paper-strewn desk, strode out into the campus, and came to a stop under a pear tree that was nearing the end of its blooming season. As a light breeze stirred its branches, a host of white petals broke free and began falling all around me, flashing silver in the slanting afternoon sunlight as they fluttered to the ground. "This is it," I thought to myself. "This is my April moment for this year."

Throughout every April since then, I have tried to remember to stop and fully appreciate at least one "April moment" every day. Whether it is the first opening tulip bud that I see, the bugling sound of a flock of geese I hear as they fly over, or the amazing variety of pastel greens waiting to be noticed in leaves emerging on the trees along the street, it takes just a quiet minute to take in my surroundings and let feelings of wonder and gratitude restore and center me, even in the busiest times. Since I retired, I have asked, why honor special moments only in April? Every day contains nourishment for the soul, if only we can stop long enough to take it in.

I've long appreciated the ancient spiritual metaphor describing many paths up to the top of the mountain of enlightenment. My way upward is reflecting on the natural world. For others, soul replenishment comes from controlled body movement, from reflective reading of spiritual texts, or from a disciplined quieting of the mind. Whatever path we follow, an intentional break from daily distractions, with a focus on this miraculous life we have to live, is a helpful strategy for all of us. It also lends a helpful theme for *Tapestry Magazine* this quarter. We hope you find solace and renewal from these shared reflections from our congregants.

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Together on the Journey

by Rev. Bruce Beisner

Minister, All Peoples UU Congregation



Our Unitarian Universalist faith is built on our belief in the inherent value and goodness of every person. All of our fancy principles and well-written statements of shared values basically boil down to the affirmation that “I’m OK and you’re OK” just the way we are.

But what happens when you’re OK, but I’m NOT OK, or the other way around? What happens when we find ourselves living with illness and limitations? What happens when what ails us seems beyond our ability to reasonably control?

In recent years, studies have shown that more Americans are struggling with mental health issues than ever before. The pressures of living in a culture with fewer and fewer social safety nets makes us all anxious. The daily news out of Washington and Frankfort and even right here in Louisville is downright depressing much of the time. And there are the very real fears many of us have as we witness the mounting waves of oppression happening in our nation and in our own communities.

what’s going on in our minds can send us spiraling into circles of despair, paralysis and anguish. When this is happening to us, whether mildly or acutely, it is vital to know that we are not alone.

Sustaining our ability to personally cope and take care of ourselves is an ongoing challenge.

Maintaining our mental health is important. It is more difficult for some of us than for others. It is more difficult some days than others. There are plenty of times when our thoughts and feelings can be a great source of meaning, direction and hope. Yet in other moments, what’s going on in our minds can send us spiraling into circles of despair,

paralysis and anguish. When this is happening to us, whether mildly or acutely, it is vital to know that we are not alone.

Studies by the National Institute on Mental Health have found that 1 in 4 Americans live with some form of a mental health challenge. 1 in 20 suffer from a serious mental illness which results in major functional impairment. And yet, we are conditioned to hide these struggles, feel ashamed

about them, and have been taught to not openly talk about them. We suffer in silence and do not reach out.

More than a few years ago, while I was serving as minister of another Unitarian Universalist congregation, I visited one of my parishioners who had been admitted to a state mental hospital after she had attempted suicide. This person was a successful scientist with a brilliant mind. She had experienced major family problems and had recently lost her job. Since entering the hospital, she had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder. We sat in her hospital room and talked. She said to me “I can’t keep doing this. There is no logical reason for me to keep living. Tell me why I should go on.” This was a hard conversation. It would be a hard conversation for any of us. We talked about the nature of her bipolar illness and discussed the drug treatments she had been put on, and what she had been told to expect they’d do for her. We talked about her despair and how it was magnified by the fact that in the past she’d been able to reason her way out of problems, analyze things and come to thoughtful ways forward. Now, her illness made this seem impossible. I said to her, “This is one of those situations we just aren’t going to be able to think through.” I assured her that I was there for her without judgment or expectation. She asked me not to tell anyone at church about where she was or what she was going through. She said she felt embarrassed and didn’t want her church friends to know.

Often it takes a little work to focus my thoughts less on all that is wrong with the world and more on what I and others are doing that is positive.

For me, staying motivated and connecting with hope and the blessings of life around me does not always come easy. Sometimes I find I need to be more mindful about turning off the news, putting away my smartphone, and going for a walk in the woods. Often it takes a little work to focus my thoughts less on all that is wrong with the world and more on what I and others are doing that is positive. Spiritual practices like prayer and meditation, eating healthy and exercising help as well. For many folks I know, seeking professional care and taking medications are necessary to maintain their mental health. And for more than a few, even those do not work all the time.

I am pleased to tell you that the church member I mentioned who was bi-polar began a new drug regimen that was very effective and eventually her emotional swings got more under control. While she continued to live with her illness, she returned to church and was able to take care of herself. Over time, it was wonderful to see her begin to feel more and more comfortable about sharing her illness with others in the congregation.

Here at All Peoples, we strive to be a warm and welcoming community for everyone, and that includes those who are struggling with their mental health. Whether you are just finding yourself feeling a little depressed and despondent from time to time, or if you are living with a diagnosed mental illness, your presence and your experiences are valued and embraced here. The more we all openly share our struggles and challenges, the more we reduce the stigma so much of society puts onto them.

One of my mentors in ministry, the Rev. David Bumbaugh, once wrote “As Unitarian Universalists we share our hope with one another. And when things are really difficult and there is no hope to be found, we create new hope together.” So may it be with us.

Bruce

New Member Focus

from Janet Taylor,
Congregational Life Coordinator



Joanna Katsikas

I grew up in the Chicago suburbs, where we attended Rolling Meadows Community Church, a non-denominational Christian church. My parents were very active, though my siblings and I sometimes “overslept”—we preferred watching *Gigglesnort Hotel* over getting up early for church. When my parents divorced during middle school, only one person from the church reached out. I believe that people didn’t want to take sides, but that lack of support turned me off of organized religion.

My middle school was mainstreamed with Deaf students, and by age 11, I decided I wanted to go into Deaf education. In high school, I joined a service group called “S.O.S.” led by a teacher, Mr. Kozlowski, who helped me get a job in a classroom for kids with autism. I was hooked and went on to become a special educator—my lifelong calling and passion.

I met my husband, Steve, at Vanderbilt University. We moved to Fayetteville, Arkansas, where he pursued a graduate degree in Psychology and I completed my degree in Special Education. We got married in Miami in 1993. If you’ve seen *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, that was basically our wedding—five Swedes on my side, 150 Greek and Jewish guests on his. We weren’t religious, so we were married by a Unitarian Universalist (UU) minister, Gerald Bardasch, who was amazing—we’re still Facebook friends!

We lived in Miami for 12 years, where our sons Max (25) and Andrew (21) were born. When Max was around 7 or 8, he started asking big questions about life. I wanted to give him a basic religious education and brought him to the local UU church. After class, he told me they’d talked about the loaves and fishes story—not as a miracle, but more like the book *Stone Soup*, where the miracle was getting people to share. That moment deepened my connection to the UUs.

Today I work in adult special education. I’ve taught all grade levels and even at the university level. What I hadn’t learned until later was the severe “cliff” in services after high school—many adults with disabilities spend decades with few opportunities. That inspired me to start North Star Achievement Center, a nonprofit that supports lifelong learning, employment, and community connection for people with disabilities. We opened in 2024, and I’ve loved every joyful minute since.

When I’m not working or with family, I enjoy reading, doing “very cross stitch” (beautiful and NSFW), and playing with my dog, Karma.



SACRED SPACES, LASTING CARE

by Eddie Ignacio

Can we do this more cheaply? It's a fair and familiar concern. But our buildings are not just structures, they are sacred vessels of ministry, community, and care. They hold our stories, our gatherings, our hopes. And like any living space that nurtures the spirit, they deserve more than patchwork solutions.

Stewardship Is More than Saving Money

True stewardship asks us to look beyond the immediate cost and consider the long-term impact. A quick fix today—like patching a roof—might seem prudent. But when that patch fails, it can lead to water damage, mold, and even solar panel failure. The cost of neglect is often far greater than the cost of care.

We are shifting our mindset from short-term savings to long-term sustainability, because our buildings deserve the same thoughtful attention we give our ministries.

This means:

- Investing in **durable materials** and **skilled labor**
- Preventing future damage through **proactive upgrades**
- Educating our congregation on the **value of sustainable building practices**

A Call to Care

Let us care for our spaces with the same intention and love we bring to our ministries. Let us build not just for today—but for generations to come. Let our stewardship be a reflection of our values, our vision, and our faith.

Stewardship in Action: A New Feature for Tapestry Magazine

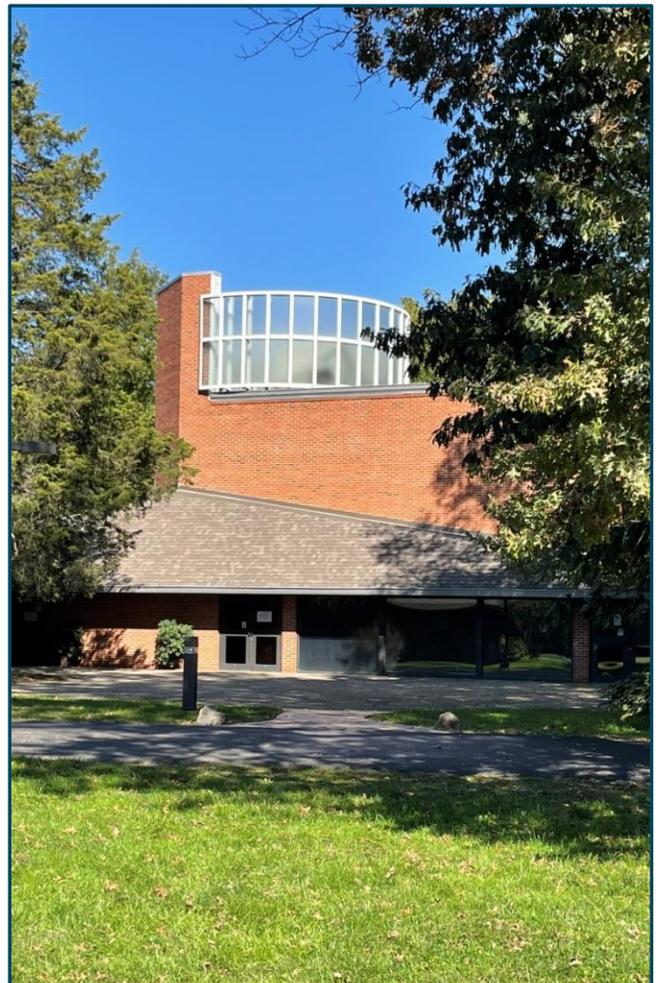
Our church buildings are more than bricks and beams—they're sacred spaces that hold our worship, our fellowship, and our future. As part of our renewed commitment to long-term care and transparency, we're introducing a new section about our stewardship in action.

In each publication, we'll share real examples of repairs, upgrades, and behind-the-scenes efforts that keep our facilities safe, functional, and welcoming. It's a window into the work we do—and an invitation to be part of it.

If you feel called to lend a hand—whether with tools, time, or talent—we welcome your help. Together, we can build a legacy of care that reflects the heart of our congregation.

Let's care for our spaces with the same love we bring to our ministries.

Stay tuned to the next *Tapestry* feature on preparations for our beloved Winter Fair!



POET'S CORNER

Time Lapse and Change by Joan Miller

Analog childhood
Many years till becoming
Digital adult

Everything's too fast
Except my 'memory box'
Takes time to retrieve!

Days pass too quickly
'A few years ago' becomes
A half century

"I didn't know you"
Until I heard you speaking
Then heard my old friend

Seeing as you were,
As you are... in my mem'ry
Long-time friends matter.

Hermit Shell by Jill Withrow Baker

My home is a place to curl up and sleep in.
Hermit though I am,
It is my shell.

I dreamt of a mansion on a hill,
A castle on the sands,
But I crawl from hut to shack,
Finding new shells as I grow.

Polished or broken,
Large or small,
Cold or hot,
Spacious or one big jumbled room,
City or country,
Suburb or apartment,
Island or inland,
North or south.
It is my shell.



Photo by Rob Kingsolver. Figures are on display in the Hearth Room.

TAKING A BREATH

Our congregants' reflections on mindfulness

Mindfulness in a World of Uncertainty

by Jan Nelson

Keeping it “simple” can be a struggle for many people these days. I for one, find it somewhat challenging at times, to focus on the things that are important to me. For the most part, I’ve always been a quite simple and low key person. However, in recent months that revolving door has changed directions.

While listening to singer songwriter John Prine’s, “*Spanish Pipedream*,” I found these lyrics just what I needed to hear!

**“Blow up your TV,
throw away your paper
Go to the country,
build you a home
Plant a little garden,
eat a lot of peaches
Try and find Jesus
on your own.”**

(OR the spiritual path YOU embrace)

I now try and spend more quality time with family, and friends, and I’ve become more intentional with activities I enjoy. I’m focusing on my body, mind, and spirit more these days. I don’t listen to the news as much, only what I need to hear to stay informed.

Recently, I have rejoined and reconnected with my All Peoples congregation, and look forward to becoming more involved and engaged in activities at the church.

All in all, I’m thankful for the life I have, especially with the love of my life, Micky. She keeps me on my toes! SO, I think I’ll **“plant a little garden,”** and **“eat a lot of peaches!”** Thank you Mr. John Prine!



THE BUTTERFLY

by Jill Withrow Baker

Five of us sat, stopped in traffic, staring out the front window of the car on our way to Lexington, at one car and a huge truck in front of it. We had been stopped on a stretch of freeway with woods on either side. Nothing to see but still cars in front and behind us, and cars whizzing along on the left, going the other way; while there was no movement on our side.

From the right, a big, brightly colored butterfly arose, flying toward the truck in front of us. It rose high above the earth, fluttering toward us. We all uttered our surprise and worry. The colors on its beautiful wings, glinting in the sun, glittered up and down, coming on to us, rising slightly with each flutter, trying to fly above the tall truck on its way to the woods on the left.

It quickly rose and fell in the sunlight, a little white and yellow spirit against the dark sides of cars and trucks, moving higher and higher with each wing flip, until it finally, as if in a gust of wind, was swept up and over the truck's boxy side and top.

It had passed over the truck just as the truck began to move and was sucked down into the moving traffic on the other side. We all mutually held our breaths, our eyes fixed on the spot it had disappeared. At last, we saw it rise again, being swept by the drafts of air in circles over the oncoming traffic, up and down, round and round. But it persisted in moving upward and onward toward the woods, its weightless wings flashing bright against the tall, dark trees.

At last, reaching the grassy shoulder beyond the highway, it fluttered toward the safety of the trees. We all let out our breath and cheered.



Photo by Jill Withrow Baker

The Benefit of Silence

by Paula Kingsolver

I have received immense benefit from spending time in silence. The first time I recall intentionally being in silence was in the 1990's at a weekend silent yoga retreat given by my yoga teachers when I lived in Nashville. I was really scared about it and became terribly sick right before the retreat – either food poisoning or a stomach virus. I decided to attend anyway. In retrospect, the illness may have just been brought on by nerves.

Once I got there I could hardly participate in the asana (posture) classes and meetings due to the illness, but I did what I could, then rested in bed for most of the first day. I woke up the next day feeling better, and as I participated not preoccupied with illness, I soon encountered my busy mind. I remember there was a song constantly playing in my head, some kind of silly pop song, as well as thoughts, an interior monologue constantly running. But I found out I could exist among companions without speaking. In fact, refraining from speaking provided a kind of privacy. Although we had shared rooms, there was little interaction beyond necessities that we could accomplish without speaking – gestures, pantomime, like motioning to invite someone to go through a doorway first.

Just refraining from speaking doesn't mean I met interior silence during that retreat, but the realization that I could be with others without speaking was quite a revelation, and the fear of being silent disappeared. I also began to notice the movement of my thoughts and, though I didn't have words for it at the time, there began to be a small separation between "me" and my thoughts. Though they were running constantly, I began to see that my thoughts are not me, but are simply a type of moving energy, while I later came to experience silence as the ground of being. Through being in silence I also came to see that emotions are also just energy moving through me.

My interest in yoga led to a profound spiritual quest that eventually took me to an ashram (yoga center) in India. There, I had further opportunities to deepen into silence in longer silence programs, as well as daily silent meditation times. Eventually, I experienced a quieting of thoughts, and a new interior world opened up. This inner world had always been



there, waiting for me, but I had never had the opportunity to be in relationship with it to this extent before. It was as if what I thought I was dropped away to reveal a more simple being that exists beyond words. As if my interiority was welcoming me, saying, “Oh good, you’re here!”

After some practice, when I sat in meditation the stillness descended quickly and I would experience simply being without the movement of thoughts. I had thought that being in silence was some sort of accomplishment, but instead silence is simply the dropping away of nonessentials. (Maybe it’s an accomplishment to set the intention and make the time for it.) Silence is actually our natural state, after all – what we experienced as babies when we were pre-verbal. And it is very restful.

I have since participated in various spiritual groups and programs where regular times in silence were part of the milieu – either times of sitting in silent meditation, or times, perhaps a few hours or a day, where the community would be in silence. As I enter the threshold of old age, life is blessedly more restful and I no longer feel as much pull toward structured retreats.

Suffering is what set me on the spiritual path, and one of the gifts of silence has been the release from the suffering of my youth. I eventually came to see that my thoughts create my suffering. It is not bad events in my life or in the world that cause me to suffer, but rather my thoughts and judgements about my life events or world events. So dropping thoughts and simply being in silence is healing, and it is actually instantaneously available at any time. Not to say that I never suffer, but when I do, I can more quickly see the way out.

Over the years, as I began to observe the movement of my thoughts, I also came to see that this personality is just a construct, and

not the true essence of what I am. For some time this realization bothered me. It felt as if I were sort of fake, like an actor or “the Paula show.” Just hearing words emanating from my mouth bothered me at times – “Who is it saying all that nonsense?” But I eventually came to realize that although personalities may be constructs, we need them to interact with one another. Paradoxically, as I came to accept this fact, my interactions and relationships became more simple and genuine. Now when I notice my personality or ego in action, it usually strikes me as humorous, rather than bothersome.

Silence has become my beloved companion. My times of meditation or spiritual practice come and go, but at almost any time I am able to be in touch with silence. Over the years I have come to see it as the threshold of the nothingness out of which everything emerges. For a long time I was afraid of it because our culture is built around noise and busy-ness. Silence is not an accomplishment or attribute. It’s beyond words, powerful, but hard to describe.

And I also like noise and busy-ness sometimes. The busy world can be fun and engaging, though it can also be a distraction from the silence that is the nourishing source of all being.

Now, being internally silent doesn’t mean refraining from speaking or activity, it just means remaining more in touch with the source of what I am as I go about being here in the world. It’s the most ordinary way to be – nothing special, yet the most amazing gift that is available to everyone. I am grateful to be able to be in touch with that.



Never Have I Ever!

text and photo by Joan Miller

I knew there'd be a rainbow. I waited and watched...and soon, there it was, sneaking over the next building. I took a picture...because that's what I do when I see rainbows. As it progressed, I took a coupla more pics...and then more....and more...and have spent a full HOUR watching the rainbow! I've never seen one last this long. Wish you couldda shared this with me. Very cool...a blessing, I think.



"Not in My Family"

by Nancy Neill

We arrived in Louisville in 1965. My husband Bill, myself, and our five children, all under seven years of age. Bill had been brought up a Baptist and I was Methodist. For similar reasons, we were both searching for a new church to attend. Bill learned about the Unitarian Universalist Church from a professor he had during his doctoral studies at Michigan State University. We decided to attend the UU church in Old Louisville. Although we enjoyed the service, we had a baby at the time, so we chose Thomas Jefferson Unitarian [now All Peoples] because of the Baby Room. Bill came a few times, but I signed the membership book and enrolled the children in classes.

With five children and another on the way, I was not able to volunteer much in the church. When I approached the subject of preventing number seven with Bill he said it was *my problem*. Actually, Bill was no help in raising the children, so I chose having a hysterectomy. I did not know he was already thinking of asking for a divorce. To shorten the story, we did divorce.

I immediately went to work, and tried to keep Bill involved as dad. I know some about mental illness, but it was from "book knowledge." When my oldest child, at age 15, began to show signs of having a mental illness, I realized I needed more information.

My son had been no problem until one day he stole something from a local hardware store. Until this incident, he was the child I needed the most, now that there was no dad in the home. It is pretty much a blur in my mind, but he continued with unacceptable behavior and finally was hospitalized. His diagnosis was paranoid schizophrenia.

I read all about the illness and was more than a little upset. Until his illness, this was the son every parent would want. He was a great student, played football and baseball, had lots of friends, and was the only one of the six children to make his bed every morning!

Although busy with the family, I joined the National Alliance on Mental Illness and Wellspring, both organizations for families with mental illness. I began speaking about mental illness all over Kentucky, including twice at our church. My oldest son refused to take his prescribed medicine and turned to illegal drugs. He was given the ultimatum to take his medicine and stop the illegal drugs, or I would have to put him out of the house. After two more years, that is what I had to do, in order to save the whole family. As far as I know, he is still here in Louisville, and will be 68 this December.

My two boys were separated by nine years, however my youngest son Conrad also became ill at age 15. He diagnosed himself, having watched his older brother. One night, as he was watching the fire die out in the fireplace, I said "Conrad, you had better go to bed; you have school tomorrow." He looked at me and said, "Mom, you don't have one schizophrenic son, you have two." I did not sleep that night, but made a promise to myself that I would try my best to give this son as normal a life as I could.

Conrad was an all-state soccer player in high school, his grades were all A's, he was 6'2" tall, and the girls were noticing him. He was in a panic about what to do. I had lots of help to get him into a

home with three men with his same illness. Luckily, it was only six blocks from my house. Conrad took the medicine and suppressed the worst symptoms. Consequently, he did have a fairly normal life. He took lessons in stained glass making and made a large collection of the music he loved. He also loved art, and painted pictures that surrounded his room. He was married to a woman in Northern Kentucky. It didn't last long, but he had lots of good things that happened to him. Conrad died at 39 from too much medicine.

Since I have been active in sharing information about mental illness, I've come across many families who do nothing when they experience mental health troubles in their children. There is a tendency to delude ourselves by saying "Not in my family!" For example, my second husband refused to label his son from a prior marriage as having mental illness. Even after his son was lost to

suicide, no one in the family would say the words "mentally ill." If people would do some exploring about their ancestry, they would be more able to see that a gene in their background is at least partially responsible. I found schizophrenia in both Bill's and my backgrounds. I realized nothing we could have done would have prevented my two sons from having schizophrenia. The illness does not go away when ignored.

Through it all, I have found peace and serenity by reading about the illness, advocacy work, participating in workshops, and keeping up with information about new treatment methods. This church has also been a great solace to me. The congregation knew and accepted me, and understood that I did not cause the mental illness that affected my sons. All Peoples has always felt like home. It is still my "home" at age ninety, sixty years after I signed the membership book.



All Peoples' People

Abbie Hames

text and photos by Paula Kingsolver

All Peoples member Abbie Hames has graciously volunteered to facilitate a meditation group at the church. Although she is a relatively new member, joining about a year ago, Abbie has a long association with our congregation, reaching back to the late 1980's.

Abbie was born and raised in El Paso, Texas. She graduated from Texas A&M, had her three children in Houston, and moved to Kentucky soon after her last child was born. She earned her Master's Degree in Education at the University of Louisville and started teaching in 1980. She taught at St. Francis (now Francis Parker), and then Centerfield Elementary. Abbie began bringing her children to All Peoples (then called Thomas Jefferson UU) in the late 1980's or early 1990's. She says, "That was my first time through." About ten or twelve years ago, Abbie was planning to return to Louisville, and came back to All Peoples, but shortly afterward, she remarried and moved to Allen County, where she found the nearby Unitarian Universalist Church of Bowling Green.



After a divorce Abbie met her life partner and moved to Bardstown where she worked at a preschool for another eight years, after a brief retirement. When Abbie's partner was diagnosed with a terminal illness, he urged her to return to Louisville and establish her home and garden, near some of her children and grandchildren. "So when I finally moved back to Louisville, it was kind of a no-brainer to come back. The name had changed, and there was a new minister [Rev. Bruce Biesner], but the first time I walked in the door, I saw three people I knew. So it was kind of a safe place to land. And I immediately found things that I love doing."

Abbie's interest in meditation began about 25 years ago, when she first joined a meditation group, and found that there are many kinds of meditation. "At the UU Church in Bowling Green, there was a Zen Buddhist group where we would read books together, talk about them, and then have our meditation time. And there was another meditation group where we made a list of all different kinds of meditation, and we would pick things to explore. At that point in my life it felt like, *I'm going in the right direction*. And I was in a women's group there. That's when I knew that UU was a great path for me. Also, maybe ten years after that, my sister and I decided to do a retreat in Tecate, Mexico at Rancho La Puerta. We had studied the teachings of [Vietnamese Buddhist monk and peace activist] Thich Nhat Han and one of his senior students was leading the meditation. That was also foundational for me because every day they had different types of meditation, so I learned a lot. That's where my personal spiritual practice started evolving. I would pick the things that kind of fit with me, and that's what I've been doing ever since."

When Abbie was living in Bardstown she also started meditating with groups on Insight Timer [a meditation app]. “Now I have a teacher that I follow on Insight and we have an online group that communicates with each other after lessons. That has become an almost daily practice.”

When she returned to All Peoples, she asked Rev. Bruce, "Isn't there a meditation group here?" He replied, “No, but we need one. You want to lead it?” Abbie had helped facilitate meditation groups before, but was initially hesitant. Later though, she led a meditation group in her Chalice Circle, “And I just loved it.” Chalice Circle member Janet Taylor suggested forming a similar group for the congregation, and the meditation group was born. Abbie realized the congregation has so many people with varied experiences in meditation and mindfulness, that it would be rewarding to have co-facilitators. “One person's going to do a segment on breathing and the breath, and somebody else is going to do something on energy. There are so many great topics.”

Abbie says, “Every decade we have challenges, but right now, so many people are overwhelmed and it's hard to stay balanced. That's why we have to ground ourselves and practice self-care, so that we can go back out into the world to do our work. Sometimes it can feel like, *I can't do it anymore*. Yet we still need to be engaged. That's why we have to find inner balance.”

The group meetings include a quiet sitting time of 15 minutes or so, with various topics and interaction before and after. “In UU we like to think, argue, analyze, and discuss. We love all the action, but we also need to be calm and mindful. Coming back to quiet and taking care of our hearts and ourselves, we have to do that to survive all this turmoil.”

“When I was so busy working and raising children, I was in survival mode. I was anxious and stressed, but I was an overachiever, I never stopped. That's still a part of me. But now, even with my grandkids, we will go out in the yard, and my eight year old grandson puts the iPad down, and he's being mindful about the bugs and the grass. The benefits for us personally, for our health and mental wellbeing are so important, but it also helps in our connections with other people.”

The meditation group meets the first and third Tuesdays of the month from 6:30-7:30 PM in the Justice Center located in the Farmhouse. Drop-ins are welcome.





THE CREATIVE SPIRIT

Jill Baker sends two of her photographs to put us in the mood for autumn.



NATURE IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Rat Snake

text and photos by Rob Kingsolver



This common Kentucky animal reminds me of a lyric from a Nina Simone song that was popular in my youth: "I'm just a soul whose intentions are good, Oh Lord, please don't let me be misunderstood!" Because rat snakes, sometimes called gray or black rat snakes, are fairly large, and because they tend to move around during the daytime, they draw a lot of attention and trigger unjustified fear in many folks. For the record, these snakes are not poisonous, and not normally aggressive. Rat snakes feed primarily on small mammals, including mice and rats, so they perform a useful pest control service for humanity. As a constrictor, this snake kills its prey with smothering coils, not poisoned fangs, so it poses minimal threat to people.

Let me say right up front that it is not a good idea, or even legal in most cases, to keep wild animals as pets. As a rural child growing up in the 1950s, I did not know that, so I kept a rat snake as a pet for many years when I was a boy. My rat snake (whom I named "Herman") established our barn as his territory, keeping it free of mice throughout the year. Every summer, I would catch Herman and keep him in a terrarium in my bedroom. Although he could bite if provoked, Herman soon lost

his fear of me, and seemed comfortable climbing up my arm or being carried around draped over the back of my neck. When I took Herman to third grade for show and tell, my teacher not only tolerated the weird little snake charmer in her class, but encouraged me to visit all the other classrooms in our school to tell them about my unusual pet. I confess that as a shrimpy little kid, I enjoyed the "street cred" those demonstrations earned me from the bigger boys. Even though snakes eat less often than we do, I knew better than to try to keep Herman in captivity for too long, so I would release him back into our barn where he could catch a meal and do his own thing. In the fall, he hibernated under the hay rack. Since rat snakes tend to stay in the same territory year after year, I would find Herman again the following spring, and take him in as a roommate for a few days on and off through the summer.

In the wild, rat snakes usually live for ten years or so, but some have lived as long as 30 years in captivity, according to the Kentucky Wildlife Center. They breed in late spring, and the female soon lays a clutch of 10-20 leathery eggs, typically under a log or in decaying vegetation. The foot-long hatchlings emerge in late summer. At that stage of life they are gray with dark spots, but they get darker as they get older. Adults grow to a length of 3-6 feet, but the record specimen was over 8 feet, making this North America's longest snake.

I sometimes get frantic calls from neighbors and friends when they find a rat snake in their yard. I always point out that the round pupils in rat snakes' eyes and their oval-shaped heads make it easy to confirm that they are not in the same family as rattlesnakes or copperheads, so they should be greeted as friends. Hoping to fool us anyway, rat snakes will vibrate their tails in dry leaves, sounding a bit like a rattler when they feel threatened. Whether escaping enemies or seeking prey, rat snakes are quite adept at climbing trees. I assume that is how they earned the genus name *Pantherophis*, which is Latin for "Panther-snake."

The classification of Kentucky's rat snakes and their regional relatives has stumped the experts for decades. Herpetologists used to recognize two species, the Gray Rat Snake and the Black Rat Snake. Because individuals of both types vary in color, the next strategy was to use geography rather than color pattern as the critical species identifier. Indeed, rat snakes living farther east of us tend to be darker, as you can see in this photo of a rat snake taking a nap on my sister's porch



in Southwestern Virginia. Alas, even geography doesn't hold up as a sure-fire key for identification, because the central and eastern types travel across our arbitrary boundaries and hybridize to produce intermediate forms.

Whatever you call them, rat snakes are beneficial critters that only ask to be left alone to do their important pest control job in peace. As for my old pet snake Herman, I am sorry I bothered him so often, but I hope that he understood my intentions were good!



Celebrating Indigenous Peoples

October 13

This text is an excerpt from the "Song of Creating People," in Navajo Ceremonial Songs, sung by Hasteen Klah, recorded and translated by Dr. Harry Hoijer and edited by Dr. George Herzog. In Navajo, "Hozhoni" means both beauty and peace. The artwork reproduced here is on display in the Hearth Room at All Peoples.

The sky, its life am I, hozhoni, hozhoni—
The mountains, their life am I—
Rain-mountain, its life am I—
Changing-Woman, her life am I—
The Sun, its life am I—
Talking God, his life am I—
House God, his life am I—
White corn, its life am I—
Yellow corn, its life am I—
Corn-pollen, its life am I—
The corn-beetle, its life am I—
Hozhoni, hozhoni, hozhoni
Hozhoni, hozhoni, hozhoni.



Heard from the Pulpit

"We live in a world that constantly whispers in our ears, 'Be less of this. Be more of that. Talk like her. Dress like him. Pray like this. Worship like this.' The world is full of standards -- social, cultural, political -- all trying to shape us into something other than who we were born to be. But I say to you this morning, you are already enough."

Dr. Paula McCraney, from "As Is," August 3, 2025

"The question is not, 'Are you a garbage collector or are you an astronaut?' The question is, 'What kind of garbage collector are you? What kind of astronaut are you?' Does hauling trash to the dump feel like a valuable service to others? Does seeing the stars from space transform your heart? Or is it just a job? How does your labor make the world a better, more complete place? How does it help? How does it serve others?"

Rev. Bruce Beisner, from "It's a Living," August 31, 2025



JUNE 2025 PUZZLE ANSWERS

Crossword

A	L	O	O	F			F	O	B		B	M	A	
B	E	F	O	R	E		D	E	V	O	N	I	A	N
J	E	F	F	E	R	S	O	N	C	O	U	N	T	Y
U	N	E		S	T	O	I	C		T	N		E	M
R	E	R	U	N		U	S	E	B	Y		S	R	U
E	X	E	S	O	U	T		R	E		T	E	D	S
		D	A		T	H	I	S	T	L	E	L	E	I
C	O	M	M	U	T	E	R	T	R	A	F	F	I	C
A	N	O	T	H	E	R	Y	O	U		L	P		
L	E	S	S		R	N		D	E	C	O	R	U	M
C	S	T		A	S	S	O	U		A	N	I	S	E
U	T		T	P		K	N	E	L	L		N	E	L
L	O	U	I	S	V	I	L	L	E	M	E	T	R	O
U	N	S	E	E	M	L	Y		A	E	N	E	I	D
S	E	E		S	I	L				R	O	D	D	Y

Acrostic

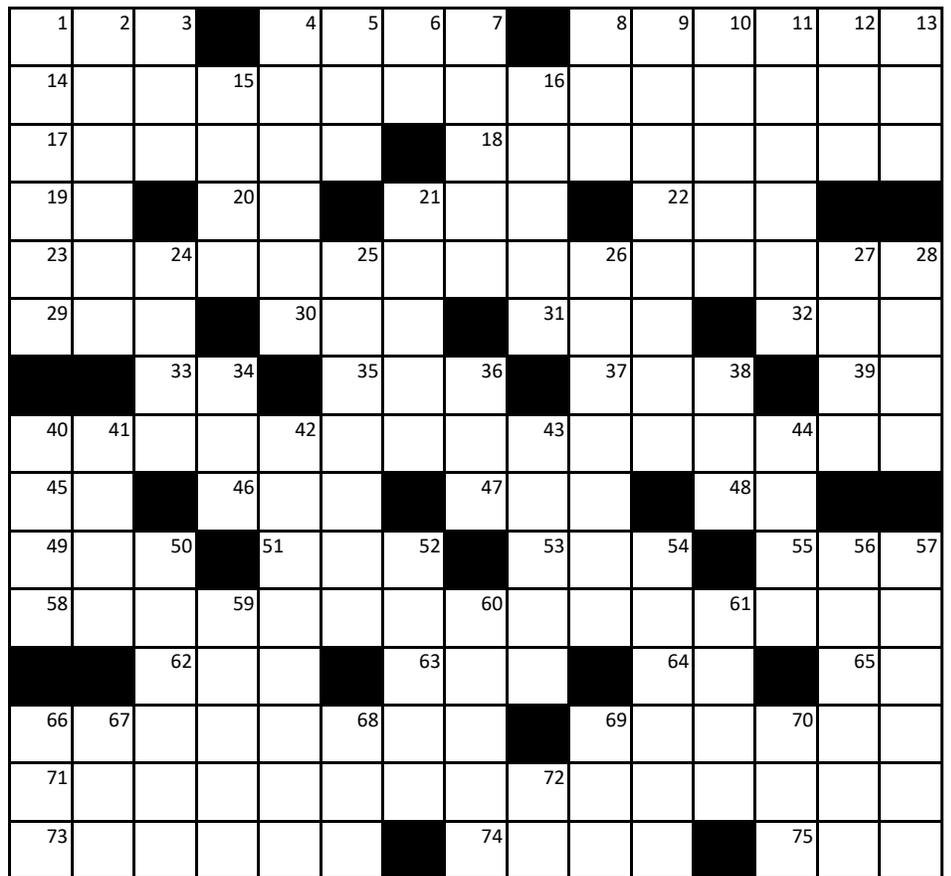
City and country, each has its own
beauty and its own pain.

Everybody knowing everybody's
business in small towns can be
challenging, and cities can be
challenging because no one can
connect except electronically.

--William P. Young

PEOPLES PUZZLE

"Word to the Wise"
by Rob Kingsolver



ACROSS

1. Ginger ____
4. A singer or a fish
8. Cone-shaped drill attachment
14. **Watchmaker's advice**
17. The "E" in $E=MC^2$
18. Where LaGrange KY is located
19. "Concerning" abbr. in a memo
20. A Freudian part of the psyche
21. Naval Joint Chiefs member (abbr)
22. Moderator of *20-across*
23. **Diver's advice**
29. Indian honorific
30. Affirming vote
31. German article
32. Referring to a birth name
33. The state "For Lovers" (abbr)
35. Tree beset by borers
37. Spirit flavored by juniper berries
39. Ozark Mountain State (abbr)
40. **Ornithologist's advice**
45. An old flame, for short
46. Feeling that clouds our judgement
47. Initials used to order a sandwich
48. Kind of electric power (abbr)
49. Gov. Agency authorized by Nixon
51. Uncanny sense (abbr)
53. Wright-Patterson Institute (abbr)
55. The night before
58. **Lotus eater's advice**
62. Feline comment
63. Dispose of
64. Triage site (abbr)
65. Alternative to Dewey (abbr)
66. Gollum's name for The Ring
69. Bob Will's lead singer Leon
71. **Veterinarian's advice**

73. Marketed used items
74. Lingering pain
75. Neither's counterpart

DOWN

1. Cell phone notices
2. In a row
3. She was expelled from a garden
4. Red circle on the calendar (2 wds)
5. All-inclusive
6. Akin to Rd and Ave
7. Was brilliant
8. Home of the Terrapins (abbr)
9. Weightlifter's hope (2 wds)
10. Depiction
11. Gripe about
12. Corporate designation (abbr)
13. Country ID for Trinidad and Tobago
15. A Great Lake
16. Run off together
21. Partner of *desist*
24. Pueblo sacred space
25. Start of a love letter
26. Box office draw (2 wds)
27. A rip or a drip

28. All the gnus
34. "___ live and breathe" (2 wds)
36. Biblical language (abbr)
38. Professional sports group (abbr)
40. A top Kentucky farm product
41. A place for exhibits
42. Baptist principle (2 wds)
43. How words are spoken
44. Bakery employee
50. Weapon suppliers
52. Pear tree genus
54. Saber-tooth cat's era (2 wds)
56. Alternative to shoelaces
57. Artist known for tessellations
59. Lizard that can walk on ceilings
60. Desert waterhole, scrambled
61. Jack-in-the-pulpit plant family
66. Award-winning brew, for short
67. Sally Field role Norma ____
68. Voluminous dictionary (abbr)
69. Heard from the bleachers
70. Daughter's brother
72. Brit's powder room (abbr)

ACROSTIC PUZZLE

by Rob Kingsolver

Follow the clues and fill in the blanks to complete each word. Then copy letters into the matching numbered squares to complete a quotation. The first letters of each of the words, read from top to bottom, spell out the author's name and topic.

1 G	2 Q	3 J		4 Q	5 B	6 F	7 A	8 B		9 K	10 S	11 G	12 S	13 H	14 D	15 O		16 C	17 H
	18 M	19 N	20 F	21 I	22 E	23 S	24 R		25 J	26 L	27 C	28 Q		29 P	30 S		31 F	32 S	33 H
34 K	35 Q	36 J	37 O	38 R	39 G	40 G		41 D	42 L	43 L		44 J	45 G	46 N	47 I		48 H	49 M	50 M
	51 A	52 K	53 B	54 G	55 S	56 M	57 O	58 H	59 N	60 A	61 Q		62 Q	63 I		64 O	65 R	66 B	67 L
	68 P	69 C	70 K	71 R	72 K	73 P	74 E	75 B	76 T	77 C		78 A	79 K	80 G	81 M	82 P	83 C	84 N	85 G
86 C	87 L	88 T		89 L	90 F	91 R	92 A		93 F	94 J	95 C	96 O	97 T	98 K		99 F	100 N	101 K	102 F
	103 S	104 K	105 D	106 P	107 S	108 C	109 T		110 B	111 H	112 E	113 G		114 K	115 M	116 I	117 K		118 P
119 G	120 T	121 P		122 E	123 T	124 J	125 Q	126 I	127 P		128 B	129 H	130 E	131 E		132 A	133 O	134 L	
135 O	136 M	137 C		138 A	139 H	140 I	141 E	142 R	143 D		144 B	145 G	146 B		147 J	148 B	149 F	150 C	151 F

A. A.I. speaker

78 92 7 51 138 132 60

K. Hell's Angel (2 wds)

79 104 101 34 70 114

B. Tight jeans? (2 wds)

53 128 66 110 144 5 146 75 148 8

L. Unicorn location

9 72 117 98 52
87 26 89 42 67 134 43

C. Bull dodger (2 wds)

108 16 150 69 95 83 77 86 27 137

M. Time for "Taps"

18 56 81 50 115 136 49

D. Grocery take-along

105 14 143 41

N. Maximum

19 100 46 59 84

E. Baseball offense

131 22 130 112 141 122 74

O. Best imaginable

135 96 15 57 37 133 64

F. House hunter's aim

20 99 149 6 31 151 102 90 93

P. Antebellum voters

118 121 29 106 127 68 82 73

G. Last 6 outs (2 wds)

39 45 145 1 113 119 80 11 85 54 40

Q. Mischievous

28 35 125 4 2 62 61

H. Referee

139 17 13 111 33 129 48 58

R. What epicures like

142 65 91 38 71 24

I. Paraphrase

126 47 21 63 116 140

S. Logical order

30 10 55 107 12 23 103 32

J. Radiated

3 147 36 124 44 94 25

T. Respectful gesture

88 123 97 76 120 109

What's Next for All Peoples?

The Tapestry's next issue, coming out in December, will ask our congregation how they imagine the future of All Peoples, and of the UU movement. Drop us a line to let us know your thoughts. Does the church need additional facilities? Do you see opportunities for expanding the size, composition, or reach of our congregation? How can we best serve our congregants, our city, our nation, and our world? Would you like to see particular programming, either in Sunday services, or in the many opportunities we offer for learning and personal growth? How would you like the congregation to be known in our community?

As always, Tapestry welcomes your contributions of artwork, photography, recipes, film and book reviews, fiction, personal stories, poetry, and essays. Sharing our creative side helps us build community and to grow as curious, experimental, imaginative, empathetic people.



Photo by Rob Kingsolver.
Basket is on display in the Hearth Room.

Tapestry magazine is published quarterly by **All Peoples Unitarian Universalist Congregation**, 4936 Brownsboro Road, Louisville, KY. Please send communications to tapestry@allpeoplesuu.com.

Tapestry's mission is to celebrate All Peoples congregational life through personal reflections, stories, poetry, music, visual arts, and a healthy measure of fun.

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Thanks to all Tapestry contributors for sharing your talents and insights with our church community.