



# CONNECTIONS

The Newsletter of All Faiths Unitarian Congregation  
A member of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations

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*All Faiths' Silver Jubilee*  
*Founders' Day*  
Celebrating 25 Years!

February 21, 2026

*Join us for an evening of remembrance, music, dinner & dancing*

Tara Woods Club House  
4:00 – 7:00 P.M.

19376 US Highway 41, No. Fort Myers

Tickets \$25 per Person  
(see details on page 12)



**NOTICE OF SPECIAL  
CONGREGATIONAL MEETING  
TO ORDAIN COMMISSIONED LAY MINISTER**

**Sunday, February 22, 2026 – 9:30 a.m.**

**(See Page 7 for Details)**



# DESTINATION JOY *by Alberita Johnson, Minister*



Greetings Beloveds,

As I write this, it's a cold day, but one that followed a truly heartwarming experience - a powerful and well-attended Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebration downtown. I was so pleased with the turnout; it was one of the best in years. Our presence was strong. Over 20 members of All Faiths marched, with many more greeting people at our table in Centennial Park. This visibility is vital to our growth, and the respect we have earned in Fort Myers is a direct result of your commitment. Thank you, All Faiths, for showing up.

**Looking Ahead to February** - We will soon turn the page to February. Although a short month, it's packed with

celebrations: Presidents' Day, Valentine's Day, our 25th anniversary and my birthday. Most importantly for our community, February 21st is our All Faiths 25th anniversary celebration. This is our chance to honor a quarter-century of achievements and look toward a hopeful future. Get ready to dress up, enjoy great food, reflect on our past, socialize (our specialty!), and dance!

**The State of Our Community** - While the national atmosphere can feel uncertain, tossing us around "like we are in a salad bowl," hope remains our strongest anchor. Last month, we successfully amended our Bylaws to include a formal process for ordination. This month, we will hold a vote to ordain me. As I've shared with my family, I am married to All Faiths, and divorce is out of the question—my love for this community is absolute, regardless of the vote's outcome. I have faithfully served as your Commissioned Lay Minister since September 1,

2023. We've faced challenges together, but our bond has held strong. That bond is the essence of our **Beloved Community**: We don't have to look or think alike to love alike. It reinforces our motto: *We are each other's keepers.*

**Pledging to Our Future** - Our pledge drive, which began last month, is crucial. We celebrate meeting our goal to cover operating expenses with pledges, which allows us to plan a responsible budget based on expected income. If you have not yet pledged, please do so—every dollar is important. Ways to pledge vary: some offer a tithe (10% or more, even up to 25% of income), others commit a flat dollar amount for the year and give over time, and some give from long-term savings disbursements. Meeting our financial goals is a family effort. We can also give our time and talent by lending a hand at fundraising events and more. When our Beloved Community has a need, the family meets it. We are the All

Faiths Unitarian Congregation family. No one is left behind.

**Liturgical Calendar Monthly Themes** - During these months, our Sunday Services, and Children and Youth Programming will reflect our themes. If you have any thoughts or ideas about upcoming services, please feel free to reach out to me.

- January:  
*Practicing Resistance*
- February:  
*Embodying Resilience*
- March:  
*Paying Attention*
- April:  
*Embracing Possibility*
- May:  
*Awakening Curiosity*
- June:  
*Flourishing Together*

**We are on this journey together. All aboard...Destination Joy.**

Love, Minister Albie

## Mission Statement

All Faiths Unitarian Congregation is committed to Justice, Equity and Compassion.

## Vision Statement

Recognizing our role as each other's keepers, we strive to be an inclusive, loving, spiritual community working to bring harmony to the world.

## All Faiths Collection Schedule

### Monthly Share-the-Plate & Special Collections

*(Please write organization and amount in the memo line of your check.)*

- February** - Special Collection: Minister's Discretionary Fund
- March** - Community Cooperative Soup Kitchen (Hunger Team)
- April** - SWFL RESET Center (Climate Action Team)

**December Share the Plate raised \$6,620 for Employee Bonuses!**

*Your generosity directly benefits our community all year long!  
We are grateful!*



*"The voice of the majority is no proof of justice."* - Friedrich Schiller

We are starting off the new year at All Faiths with much excitement and energy. As I stated last month, we want to begin 2026 with action. As you will see below, there is a flurry of important events and activity that has occurred already this year and other events that I urge everyone to get involved with.

- Stewardship Pledge Campaign – Our annual pledge drive is coming to a close and we are grateful for your support. Your pledges are the life-line of all that we do here at All Faiths. If you haven't turned in your pledge, it is NEVER TOO LATE. No matter how big or small, we rely on your generosity to keep the wonderful things we do alive.

- Membership - All Faiths had 13 new people attend the last Newcomers Orientation event on Jan 17th and expressed interest in becoming members. This is GREAT news and we are pleased that our message is getting out. The new members will be presented to the congregation during service on Sunday, January 25th.

- Founder's Day – I highly encourage everyone to get their ticket for this once in a lifetime event. We are celebrating the 25th anniversary of the founding of our beloved All Faiths. The event consists of a reception with wine and music, then an amazing, catered dinner, with a short program honoring our original

founders followed by dancing afterwards. It will be Saturday, February 21st from 4 to 7pm at Tara Woods Clubhouse in North Fort Myers. All for ONLY \$25! You can't get a better deal for a night out with friends. If you are so inclined, we are also offering an opportunity to make an additional donation that will be used to help support our building expansion later this year.

- Special Congregational Meeting – The Board has decided to conduct the official vote for the Ordination of our Minister to be held on Sunday, February 22nd at 9:30am, the day after Founders Day. This is a week later than previously published. We believe that it is necessary to have enough time for mailed ballots to be received by members and then allow ample time to either return them directly to the office or send them back by mail. This will be a confidential vote by the congregation, and we have taken steps to ensure its integrity.

A Question & Answer session is scheduled for Sunday, February 8th at 9:30 am before service if you have any questions about the process.

Ballots will be available at the Q&A session for members to either take home or complete that day. All ballots returned by mail, must be received in the Saturday mail delivery at All Faiths. If you so choose, you may return completed ballots in person NO LATER THAN 8:30am on Sunday February 21st – NO EXCEPTIONS. The votes will be tallied at 8:30

a.m. Sunday morning where the results will be announced at the Special Meeting on the 22nd before service. More information can be found about this inside the Newsletter.

- All Faiths in Action Job Fair – We had a very successful turn out for our Job Fair. Many people expressed interest in volunteering for our various teams and committees at the congregation. I am pleased with the response. The Chair or Co-chair of those teams you signed up for should be reaching out to you. We really appreciate your support.

- Social Justice Outreach - All Faiths and The Racial Equity Team had a great turnout in support of MLK Jr Day in Fort Myers on Jan 19th. Despite the cold weather, we had many members join in the March and Festival to celebrate this important man and honor his work and memory.

- Building & Grounds - We have received 2 out of the 3

quotes for the building expansion project that is planned to create a larger entryway and create a children and youth meeting space. We are in the process of comparing them and hope to have a decision on a contractor soon.

- Miscellaneous:

- o I will be scheduling a meeting in the near future to discuss setting up a fund-raising team. My intent is to work on ways to generate additional income for All Faiths by hosting various events. These opportunities will allow anyone who has time and talent to get involved with supporting All Faiths. Anyone interested in helping with this idea, please see me anytime.

- o Several people have expressed interest in helping to combat Food Insecurity in our area by signing up to get involved with a Hunger Team. I will set up a meeting soon for those interested to see what we can do.



*Another successful Habitat for Humanity Project organized by Barb McFarlane. These ladies and one gentleman insulated a house in No. Fort Myers. From the left: Julie Simmons, Rosalie Kuehn, Barb, Regina Kilmartin, Kathy Banks, Michelle Gemma, Bob, and Weezie Close.*

# Happening at All Faiths

## Happy February Birthday to you!



- Feb 2 Liz Rock
- Feb 3 Albie Johnson
- Feb 3 Lisa Scroggins
- Feb 10 Bo Filipski
- Feb 14 Jolene Jeranson
- Feb 15 Linda Arthur
- Feb 17 Carol Sommer
- Feb 18 Howard Silverman
- Feb 26 Nita Flores

### And Coming Up...

- March 1 Eileen Moran
- March 3 Charlotte Blitt
- March 4 Frankie Jennings

*If you are missing or see someone who is missing from the birthday roster, please let Regina know.*



## Solos Luncheon!

**Saturday, February 14, 2026**  
**1:00 p.m.**  
**(rescheduled from Feb. 7)**

**Clase Azul**  
**3922 Del Prado S.**  
**Cape Coral 33904**

Everyone is welcome to join the Solos for outings and lunches. You just have to be flying solo that day (in other words, without your better half - it's tradition!)

**Please RSVP to: Annely Hudanick**  
[annelyblue@hotmail.com](mailto:annelyblue@hotmail.com)

## The All Voices Choir Practice

**Thursdays 5:00 - 6:30pm**

The choir welcomes new members. You do not have to be a professional singer or read sheet music to join. Go ahead, give it a try. Contact: Carlos Garcia, [ceegeefm@gmail.com](mailto:ceegeefm@gmail.com).

## McGregor Clinic Collection

**Every 3rd Sunday of the Month at Service**

The McGregor Clinic is a non-profit health care clinic designed to provide an integrated and holistic approach to patient and community care. Your donations of *men's and women's clothing, and non-perishable foods*, benefit people with HIV/AIDS and their families. Contact: David Donovan, [ddonovan722@gmail.com](mailto:ddonovan722@gmail.com)

## Book Club

**Meeting on the 3rd Monday of the Month at 12 p.m.**

The book club is casual and fun. No assigned books, just show up and be prepared to talk about an interesting book you've read or are reading. Contact: Diane Chernow, [dianecher@comcast.net](mailto:dianecher@comcast.net)

## Sunday News Talk & Adult Ed. Workshops

**Sundays at 9:15 a.m.**

News Talk is a weekly forum to discuss current events and news in between Adult Education Workshops. The next Adult Ed. Workshop facilitated by Joyce Ramay will begin on March 1 and is entitled: *Spiritual Literacy: Reading the Sacred in Everyday Life*.

## Mexican Train Dominoes

**Meeting on the 2nd & 4th Friday of the Month at 2 p.m.**

Join in on this fun and popular dominoes game. Don't know how to play? Come and we'll teach you -- it's easy. Contact Ken Malkin at [kennethmmalkin@gmail.com](mailto:kennethmmalkin@gmail.com) to get on email distribution list.

## ACMA Songwriters Circle

**Meeting on Sundays 2:00 - 5:00 p.m.**

The circle is for Acoustic Songwriters of all levels. Songs and experiences are shared in a non-judgmental, casual atmosphere. All are welcome to come and play or just listen. ACMA is secular and is all about original music. No Membership required. We support Americana/Folk, Singer/Songwriters and provide a venue for performing original music.

# February 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>1</b> <b>9:15am</b> News Talk <b>10:30am</b> Service & CYP  <b>2-5pm</b> ACMA Circle	<b>2</b> Be Kind to Groundhogs!  	<b>3</b>  <b>1:30pm-Zoom</b> Climate Action Team Mtg.	<b>4</b>  <b>7pm</b> Fort Myers Camera Club	<b>5</b>  <b>5pm</b> Choir Rehearsal	<b>6</b>          	<b>7</b>  <b>10 am</b> Nicole & Frank Tie the Knot!  <b>7pm</b> ACMA Concert (Pg. 11)
<b>8</b> <b>9:30am</b> Ordination Q&A <b>10:30am</b> Service & CYP  <b>12pm</b> Rainbow Connection  <b>2-5pm</b> ACMA Circle	<b>9</b>          	<b>10</b> <b>10am</b> Racial Equity Team Mtg.	<b>11</b>          	<b>12</b> <b>10 am</b> Finance Mtg.  <b>5pm</b> Choir Rehearsal	<b>13</b> <b>2pm</b> Dominoes  <b>7pm</b> ACMA Concert (Sat.)(Pg. 11)	<b>14</b> <b>1pm</b> Solos Lunch (Rescheduled See Pg. 4)  
<b>15</b> <b>9:15am</b> News Talk <b>10:30am</b> Service & CYP  <b>2-5pm</b> ACMA Circle  McGregor Clinic Collection	<b>16</b>  <b>PRESIDENTS DAY</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>  Book Club Rescheduled to 2/25	<b>17</b>  <b>1pm</b> Board Meeting	<b>18</b>  <b>7pm</b> Fort Myers Camera Club	<b>19</b>  <b>5pm</b> Choir Rehearsal  <b>7pm</b> Tamiami Tale Tellers	<b>20</b>          	<b>21</b> 
<b>22</b> <b>9:30am</b> Special Cong. Meeting  <b>10:30am</b> Service & CYP  <b>7pm</b> ACMA Concert (Pg. 11)	<b>23</b>          	<b>24</b>          	<b>25</b>  <b>12pm</b> Book Club	<b>26</b>  <b>5pm</b> Choir Rehearsal	<b>27</b>  <b>2pm</b> Dominoes	<b>28</b>          <b>7pm</b> ACMA Concert (Pg. 11)
<b>29</b> <b>9:15am</b> News Talk <b>10:30am</b> Service & CYP  <b>2-5pm</b> ACMA Circle Ice Cream Social  Pet Shelter Collection	<b>30</b>          	<b>31</b>          	Please check your emails over the summer for events, programs, and any calendar updates or changes.			

Visit our website for information on events and programs [www.allfaithsuo.org](http://www.allfaithsuo.org)

## FEBRUARY 2025

### SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICES

#### THEME: EMBODYING RESILIENCE

**In-House & Live on Facebook at 10:30 a.m.**

Recorded services can be viewed at [www.allfaithsuu.org](http://www.allfaithsuu.org)  
or on our YouTube channel.

#### Feb. 1 – Say It Loud, Say Their Name

Speaker – Alberita Johnson

Worship Associate – Nicole Racine

Music by Carlos Garcia

Pledge Dive Testimonial – Marge & Bob DiGalbo

#### Feb. 8 – Super Bowls vs. Blessing Bowls

Speaker – Alberita Johnson

Worship Associate – Annelly Hudanick

Music by Carlos Garcia & Choir

2nd Collection – Minister's Discretionary Fund

9:30 a.m. Congregational Meeting:

Q&A regarding Ordination

#### Feb. 15 – Founding All Faiths: An Act of Resilience

Speakers – Charlotte Blitt, Frankie Jennings and  
Joyce Ramay

Worship Associate – Alberita Johnson

Music by Donalie Benyak and Carlos Garcia

McGregor Clinic Collection

#### Feb. 22 – Joyful Resiliency

Speaker – Rev. Dr. Ronaldo Archer

Worship Associate – Alberita Johnson

Music by Carlos Garcia & Choir

9:30 a.m. Congregational Meeting

Vote on Ordination

## FEB. CHILD & YOUTH PROGRAM

by Sharon Heinrich, CYP Director

February is all about exploring how we can notice, grow, and strengthen our ability to bounce back when life feels challenging. Resilience isn't just about enduring; it's about finding ways to move forward with courage, creativity, and joy.

With that in mind, here are the four areas of resilience we will be looking at in our sessions this month: As it is Black History Month, we are lifting up and celebrating several Black inspirational Unitarian Universalist ancestors whose courage, vision, and resilience continue to inspire us today. This theme also allows us to highlight and honor one of our core UU Sources of Inspiration: Direct experiences of transcending mystery and wonder, which move us to a renewal of the spirit.

**Opening:** We are here together with love at our center. We will think with our minds, love with our hearts, and create with our whole body.

**February 1:** Finding Resilience through Nature - "Fred, the Tree"

**February 8:** Finding Resilience through Grit - "Potatoes, Eggs, and Coffee Beans"

**February 15:** Finding Resilience through Community - "The Bamboo and the Storm"

**February 22:** Finding Resilience through Silliness - "Francis Ellen Watkins Harper"

I would like to encourage our congregation to share talent, skill and knowledge with our young people. Please let me know if you would like me to schedule a short time on a Sunday morning for you to share with the young ones.



*A big thank you to everyone who showed up on MLK Day! Over 20 All Faithers braved the cold attending the march and rally on January 18th. Just like our t-shirts say, we are "Committed to Justice, Equity and Compassion"!*

**NOTICE OF SPECIAL  
CONGREGATIONAL MEETING**

**Sunday, February 22, 2026 - 9:30 a.m.  
(before service)  
All Faiths Sanctuary**

**Members of All Faiths Unitarian  
Congregation, Inc. are invited to attend a  
Special Meeting of the Congregation to vote  
on Ordination of Commissioned Lay Minister.**

*Barb McFarlane, Secretary*

**SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL  
MEETING - SUNDAY  
FEBRUARY 22, 2026  
9:30 A.M.**

All Members of All Faiths Unitarian Congregation are invited and encouraged to attend a Special Congregational Meeting to vote on ordination of our commissioned lay minister. Ballots and instructions on confidentiality will be delivered to members in advance of the meeting.

**Ballots must be turned in on or before 8:30 a.m. on Sunday, February 22, 2026.** Ballots will be counted and the results revealed at the meeting.

Meeting to be held on Sunday, February 22, 2026, at 9:30am BEFORE SERVICE.

**Q&A Session will be held on Sunday,  
February 8 at 9:30am. Ballots will be handed  
out then, or mailed to those not in attendance.**

**See Ordination Process on Pages 10 and 11  
of this newsletter.**

## JOYS & SORROWS

*With our apologies for any omissions, here are the joys  
& sorrows expressed by our members in January.*

**Linda Arthur** completed her course of chemo and radiation treatments for cancer. She was able to return to part-time work. We hope that she obtains good results.

**Christopher Dudek** was hospitalized with heart problems and a blockage. He was given a pacemaker. We hope he improves.

**Sharon Gray** reported that her premature grandson is home now. He is still underweight but gaining slowly. We hope he has steady progress.

**Frankie Jennings** had a serious bout of cold and flu. We hope she has a good recovery.

**Su Lurker** was hospitalized and is being treated for lung cancer. We hope that the treatments are effective and the results are good.

**Joyce Ramay** fell and suffered a fractured nose. We hope that her injury heals well.

**Linda Runkle** had a bad episode of coughing with respiratory infection. We hope she has a good recovery.

There are a lot of respiratory infections right now. If you or someone in your household is infected, it is best that you stay home to prevent further spreading.

We are grateful for the many blessings in our lives, and for the loving care provided in our community.

*Joyce Ramay,  
Care and Support Coordinator*

## ACMA LIVE MUSIC SCHEDULE!

**Saturday, February 14 - 7:00pm**

Rupert Wates in Concert  
David Bavaria opens

**Sunday, February 22 - 7:00pm**

Muriel Anderson in Concert,  
Bill Metts opens

**Saturday, February 28 - 7:00pm**

Moors & McCumber in Concert  
Bruce Gallant opens

**The Listening Room at All Faiths**  
*General public \$18/Member discount \$12  
Donations at the Door*

# CLIMATE ACTION TEAM NEWS

by Joan Marshall, Co-Chair



The tabling event held after the January 18th Sunday morning service was a major disappointment. Literally, only one person stopped to learn more about the work of the Climate Action Team. However, we believe that was not so much a lack of interest, as a lack of time. We believe All Faiths congregants care

deeply about the world we are leaving for future generations and want to do whatever they can to address and counteract the impact on our planet of the ever more threatening climate crisis. To assist you in this effort, CAT has prepared this handout detailing effective actions you can take. Copies are available at All Faiths.

CAT – Individual steps to combat climate change.

Individuals combat climate change through high-impact lifestyle shifts like adopting plant-based diets, reducing air travel, living car-free, and choosing smaller families, alongside reducing energy consumption at home (insulation, efficient appliances, LEDs, washing cold), using green transport (walking, biking, public transit), reducing food waste, and making conscious consumer/banking choices, all aimed at lowering personal carbon footprints.

## High-Impact Lifestyle Changes (Most Significant Reductions)

- **Diet:** Shift to a plant-based or vegetarian diet, reducing meat consumption.
- **Travel:** Avoid flying when possible; choose trains or buses for long distances; fly economy if necessary; live car-free or carpool.

## Home & Energy

- **Energy Use:** Reduce heating/cooling, switch to LED bulbs, use energy-efficient appliances, wash clothes in cold water, and air-dry laundry.
- **Efficiency:** Improve home insulation; consider heat pumps over gas furnaces.
- **Renewables:** Install solar panels or choose renewable energy providers.

## Transportation

- **Green Commuting:** Walk, bike, use public transport, or carpool.
- **Efficient Driving:** Combine trips and maintain fuel-efficient vehicles.

## Consumption & Waste

- **Reduce & Reuse:** Minimize purchases, buy second-hand, and use reusable items (cups, bags).
- **Food:** Reduce food waste and compost scraps.
- **Water:** Install low-flow showerheads and toilets.

## Financial & Advocacy

- **Ethical Banking:** Switch banks or pension funds to those that don't invest in fossil fuels.
- **Support & Learn:** Educate yourself, support climate organizations, and vote for climate-conscious policies.

# RACIAL EQUITY TEAM NEWS

by Carole Latino, Co-Chair

What an exciting meeting we had with Lodovic Kimble, retired Professor, and Dr. Darryl Clare! These men are movers and shakers in our town. We are excited to have them come to our monthly meetings. Lodovic is very knowledgeable about many things and he really told some truths that a lot of people were not aware of. He went way back to ancient Egypt and how things were before slavery. He's a very interesting man. We all are looking forward to hearing more.

What a wonderful MLK day we had! Truthfully, I was dreading the cold weather, but we Floridians know how to layer. The sun was shining brightly all day, which helped the situation. I was so proud and grateful to All Faiths members for showing up and standing out! We had 25 in total who marched, while a few more stayed at the booth.

This year we had real entertainment on the stage. Our own Melinda Blou Note was there rocking the crowd. There were a few others that I wasn't familiar with, but they were good. The only thing I was disappointed in was the lack of people on the sidelines with megaphones singing our marching songs. When I inquired, they said the one megaphone they had wasn't working. In the past they had several.

Regardless, it turned out to be a beautiful day. We met a few new people and hopefully we will gain some new members.

## NEED SOME HELPFUL ADVICE?

If you need assistance or advice about obtaining food stamps and/or Medicaid, Frank Stephens, who works for the state processing such applications, may be able to help. He would not be able to look at your case directly, but can give advice and assist with submitting applications.

If you need such help, please contact Frank Stephens, 239-747-4976 or [fdinfla99@gmail.com](mailto:fdinfla99@gmail.com).

## TREASURER'S REPORT

by John Conrad, Treasurer

### Cash Assets – December 2025

First Horizon Checking	\$ 7,008
Raymond James Legacy	5,189
Live Oak Operating Reserve (CD)	23,945
First Horizon Capital Reserve	1,715
Live Oak Capital Reserve (S)	33,607
Live Oak Operating Reserve (S)	27,584
Live Oak Legacy (CD)	22,611
Live Oak Legacy Savings	23,516

<b>Total</b>	\$145,175
Prior Month	<u>151,386</u>
<b>Net Gain/Loss</b>	<b>( \$ - 6,212)</b>

### December 2025 Profit & Loss

Operating Income	\$ 16,797
Operating Expense	<u>20,117</u>
<b>Net Gain/Loss</b>	<b>( \$ - 3,319)</b>

### Revenue/Operating Income and Expenses:

As we entered the new 2025-2026 fiscal year on April 1, All Faiths budgeted \$202,086 for pledge giving; to date, actual Not Alone pledges totaled \$185,160 (86.9%).

In December, we received \$12,157. in pledge giving towards our Not Alone Pledge Drive. And in the last fiscal year, \$28,412.63 was received for the Not Alone pledge drive.

Year to date (since April 1), our pledge giving has totaled \$114,331, while we budgeted \$151,566. (75.4%).

December's Interest Income was \$383.

Between September and December, \$15,000 was "borrowed" from our Operating Reserve savings account to ensure all expenses are covered. To date, this has not been repaid.

At the beginning of the 2023-2024 fiscal year, several new accounts were created at Live Oak to generate increased interest income. The 1 Year CD rate is 4.1%. And the Savings rate is currently at 3.00%.

The December monthly transfer/deposit of \$1,640 to the Live Oak Capital Reserve account was made. There were Capital expenses of \$675 for choir robes and choir microphone stands; these were funded by the Bob Way memorial gift. The architect was paid \$6,525 to finish the building renovation bid specifications. And finally, a \$350 deposit payment was made for fence repair.

- In December, \$6,620 was collected for Employee Bonuses! Thanks to all for the generous donations!!

## THE STORY OF MANO A MANO

by Charlotte Blitt



**Segundo & Joan Velasques,  
Mano a Mano Founders**

*One day in the fall of 1967, Segundo Velasquez watched a tiny, fair-skinned young woman struggle to carry a tin bucket, full of water, down a dirt road on the outskirts of Cochabamba Bolivia. Like any well-mannered young man he caught up with the woman, and though she was a stranger, took her heavy bucket.*

*For the slender Segundo to intervene when someone needed help was typical. But for Joan Swanson White to accept such help was not. With quiet but fierce self-sufficiency, the young woman from the United States struggled with the effects of childhood polio, pushing herself beyond capacity. One of her arms was nearly useless. Segundo assessed the situation and moved in to help. That first brief encounter over a bucket of water was the beginning of a deep and lasting connection, a chance meeting that grew into a complex, shared struggle to bring U.S. resources to bear on the profound needs of rural Bolivia.*

*Their story is one of challenges, beginning in childhood, intercultural pitfalls, and ultimately the creation of grassroots international partnership at its best.*

### **Excerpt from *La Familia, An International Love Story***

**by Mary Martin**

In 2024 sadly Joan succumbed to complications caused by polio which she contracted when she was 2. She overcame her year in an iron lung, her 5 years of being in full body casts and back spinal fusion at age 10. She overcame those adversities and obtained a MSW and then a PhD. Joan and Segundo have helped thousands of Bolivians through the work of Mano a Mano – building medical clinics, schools, wells and roads in addition to teaching gardening techniques and nutrition.

## **INFORMATION REGARDING ALL FAITHS MINISTER AND ORDINATION (revised 1/19/26)**

### **What is the recent history of All Faiths Minister position?**

- 1) Over 3 years ago our settled minister left for another post in the UK.
- 2) To qualify as All Faiths settled minister under UUA guidelines, the minister must be in fellowship with the UUA and normally this requires graduation from a seminary with a Master of Divinity followed by a 2-year ministerial residency. It also requires an affirmative vote by at least 90% of the congregational members. An affirmative vote results in the total Congregation hiring the settled minister. The Board then provides guidance and oversight in a collaborative relationship with the minister.
- 3) The All Faiths search committee was unsuccessful in recommending any candidate for the Minister position who was in fellowship with the UUA and met those qualifications. The search committee then recommended that the Board consider hiring our Children and Youth Director to serve as our Lay Minister. At the time, she was in the process of completing her Commissioned Lay Minister program. She was hired as the Lay Minister on September 1, 2023.
- 4) Our Lay Minister does not have the necessary credentials to be in fellowship with the UUA and therefore cannot be considered as our settled minister. But our Lay Minister has been credentialed as a Commissioned Lay Minister by the Central East Region of the UUA.
  - a) The current contract with our Lay Minister ends on March 31, 2026; and the Board of Directors is currently in the process of renewing the contract for 1 additional year.
  - b) As a Lay Minister, she is employed and supervised by the Board of Directors.
- 5) There is currently no Bylaws language regarding Ordination. This is why the Board of Directors has proposed the following language:
  - a) To be ordained, the individual would need to be approved by a vote of the Congregation, requiring a majority quorum of the members to have participated and 75% approval. A special meeting of the Congregation was held on January 11, 2026 to amend our Bylaws regarding this and the changes were approved.

### **What does Ordination mean in the UUA and at All Faiths?**

- A. A congregation can choose to ordain a lay person who has not gone through the UUA's full multi-year credentialing process for professionally educated ministers. However, this is considered a "local" ordination and is for the ministry specific to that one congregation. Such an individual would not be in "fellowship" with the UUA as a whole, meaning they would not be eligible for the UUA's settlement process to serve other congregations or receive the same benefits as a fully fellowshiped minister.
- B. The Ordination process reflects the belief that the congregation can discern the working of the "Spirit of Life". It is also about the transformation of the congregation and its commitment to supporting that person's ministry. The ordination happens to the person

*(continued on page 11)*

being ordained, but it is not about that person. Rather, it is a transformational experience in which the total congregation evolves together.

- A. If our Lay Minister is affirmed by a vote of the members, she can be ordained.
  - a. She can then be referred to as “Reverend”.
- B. In essence, Ordination in the UU church is a deeply communal act where a covenanted body of people formally recognizes, affirms, and commissions one of its own to religious leadership and service.
- C. The Minister commits to leading and caring for the congregation, and the congregation commits to supporting the minister and their shared work.
- D. Through the act of Ordination, the congregation formally and publicly recognizes the individual's call to ministry and confers ministerial authority.
  - a. Authority primarily flows from the local congregation, which has the sole power to ordain an individual into the ministry.
  - b. An ordained minister has the right and expectation to speak the truth as they understand it without fear. However, ministers are expected to clarify when they are speaking as an individual versus representing the institution.
  - c. Ministerial authority empowers ministers to lead public worship, provide pastoral care and counseling, conduct rites of passage and provide vision and direction in collaboration with lay leaders.
  - d. In essence, ordination’s ministerial authority is a blend of congregational empowerment and commitment to shared leadership (with the other staff and lay leaders within the congregation) and ethical conduct within the faith’s principles.

**With the approval of the Bylaw change on January 11, 2026, when would a vote on ordination take place?**

- The Board of Directors has scheduled a vote on ordination for **Sunday, February 22, 2026**. Formal notice for the special congregational meeting will appear in the February Newsletter.

**If ordination is voted for affirmatively, will the Commissioned Lay Minister be considered a Settled Minister?**

- A vote by the Congregation for a candidate to become our Settled Minister requires the candidate to be in Fellowship with the UUA. If our Commissioned Lay Minister meets those requirements in the future, then such a congregational vote could be considered.

You are cordially invited to  
**All Faiths Unitarian Congregation's**  
**25th Founders' Day Celebration & Capital Fundraiser**  
 Saturday, February 21, 2026 - 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Tara Woods Club House  
 19376 US Highway 41, No. Fort Myers, FL 33903  
*(Evening Reception – Music – Dinner – Dessert – Drinks)*

**Please RSVP by February 15, 2026 (Firm)**  
 Tel: (239) 226-0900 Email: [office@allfaithsuu.org](mailto:office@allfaithsuu.org)

Dinner \$25/Person  
 Capital Fund Donation\* \$50 \$75 \$100 Other \$\_\_\_\_\_

*\*Donations will fund expansion of All Faiths' vestibule & the addition of a classroom*

## All Faiths Unitarian Congregation

2756 McGregor Blvd., Fort Myers, Florida 33901

Phone: (239) 226-0900 – Email: [office@allfaithsuu.org](mailto:office@allfaithsuu.org) – Website: [www.allfaithsuu.org](http://www.allfaithsuu.org)

**Executive Board:** David Donovan, Chair; Dick Scudder, Vice Chair; John Conrad, Treasurer; Barb McFarlane, Secretary.

**Directors:** Helen Dixon, Frank Geltner, Carol Heilsberg, Ken Malkin, Lewis Robinson.

**Ex-Officio, Non Voting:** Marge DiGalbo, Past Chair; Alberita Johnson, Minister

**Staff:** Regina Kilmartin, Administrator; Carlos Garcia, Music Director; Sharon Heinrich, CYP Director; Joe Gayton, Sexton.

**Commissioned Lay Minister: Alberita (Albie) Johnson**

### Communications

*Newsletter*

Regina Kilmartin

*Proofreaders*

Weezie Close/Joyce Ramay

*Social Media & Website*

Regina Kilmartin/Becky Ross

### Sunday Service Team

Alberita Johnson

### Hospitality

Frank Stephens

### Program Support

Michelle Gemma/Barb McFarlane

### Member Services

Dottie Mayol/Carole Latino

*Greeters*

Dick Scudder

*Care and Support*

Joyce Ramay

### Finance

Joyce Ramay

### Stewardship Committee

Ken Malkin

### Nominating Committee

Sharon Gray

### Sound Technicians

David Donovan/Brad Davidson

### Livestreaming

Regina Kilmartin/Sharon Gray

Brad Davidson

### Building and Grounds

Frank Geltner/Brian Bigelow

### Social Action & Outreach

*Climate Action Team*

Joan Marshall/Carol Heilsberg

*Racial Equity Team*

Carole Latino/Ludovic Kimbell

### L.I.F.E.

Ken Malkin

Barb McFarlane

JoAnn Hilliard

Cindy Thompson

*Mano a Mano*

Charlotte Blitt

*Operation Joy & Solos Group*

Annelly Hudanick

*Animal Ministry*

Sharon Gray

*Rainbow Connection*

David Donovan

**Founding Minister:** The Late Rev. Dr. Wayne A. Robinson



Deadline for the **March** Issue of *Connections*  
 is **February 18**

(Brief announcements may be accepted later,  
 and will be included *if* space and time permit.)



OFFICE HOURS: 9am to 4pm, Monday–Thurs;  
 9am to 12pm, Friday & Sunday.  
 Congregational Administrator: Regina Kilmartin