



CONNECTIONS

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

Inside

| | |
|---|----|
| Destination Joy..... | 2 |
| <i>by Alberita Johnson, CL Minister</i> | |
| Sunday Collection Schedule..... | 2 |
| Board Notes..... | 3 |
| Happening at All Faiths..... | 4 |
| January 2026 Calendar..... | 5 |
| January Sunday Services..... | 6 |
| Newcomers Orientation..... | 6 |
| Child & Youth Program Notes..... | 6 |
| Notice of Special Meeting..... | 7 |
| "In Covenant We Grow" - a poem..... | 7 |
| Rainbow Connection News..... | 8 |
| Racial Equity Team News..... | 8 |
| Stewardship Drive Kick-Off..... | 9 |
| Climate Action Team News..... | 9 |
| Joys & Sorrows..... | 10 |
| Treasurer's Report..... | 10 |
| Operation Joy Says Farewell..... | 10 |
| ACMA Concert Lineup..... | 11 |
| Founders' Day Silver Jubilee..... | 12 |
| The Ordination Process..... | 13 |



All Faiths In Action Event

January 18, 2026 - After Service on the Patio
Come see where you fit in. Learn how you can support your congregation and make an impact in our community.
There is something for everyone!

MLK Day 40th Commemorative March & Rally

January 19, 2026 - (office closed)

Sign up on the bulletin board to march in the parade and/or staff the All Faiths' table at Centennial Park.

NOTICE OF SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING TO AMEND BYLAWS

Sunday, January 11, 2026 – 9:30 a.m.
(See Page 7 for Details)

DESTINATION JOY

by Alberita Johnson, Minister



Happy New Year Beloveds,

My gratitude to the entire All Faiths Family for all your love and support of our Beloved Community through the year 2025. The year 2026 is upon us, as we have turned the page to another year much has changed and much has remained the same.

2026 is inescapable, time does not wait for us to catch up, it keeps moving. It is at this time of year that uncertainty fills me with strange fears of what it will be like.

The year 2025 started off with immense change with DOGE, dismantling DEI, the continued war on those of us who are WOKE, detention centers housing immigrants, events and poor performance

of our leaders and so much more that it is easy to lose hope. But we must move forward with locked arms marching in solidarity in body and spirit with love and peace in our heart.

But how...

There is a mantra I repeat daily, "Everyday, in every way, all my needs are met," I write it in my journal, and recite it. I find it settles me down, and reminds me to trust even in the midst of uncertainty.

Uncertainty is tricky for us humans not because we are weak, but because of how our mind and bodies evolved. We like to anticipate what is next. We are constantly running models...if I do this, then that will happen. But uncertainty breaks those models, creating a gap the brain cannot fill and the gap feels like danger. Which elicits various responses as our nervous system tries to adjust, we become heightened, stressed, unsettled or off even when nothing is wrong, all be-

cause there is uncertainty.

Uncertainty is a place of disruption off center..., I might be wrong, I might lose control, I might not be who I thought I was, causing destabilization and yes, sometimes I feel powerlessness due to uncertainty.

But there is hope...

Uncertainty has helped me dissolve the illusion of control, by recognizing that certainty narrows the field of imagination, whereas uncertainty frees me to imagine. It interrupts habits, because uncertainty disrupts autopilot.

As we enter the new year, let us lean into uncertainty from, "I know," to "let's find out." There are new things on the horizon as we find out what they are, let us lean into collaboration, listen with our hearts, trust improvisation and make meaning together. Let us remember that uncertainty destabilizes identity just enough to allow for transformation.

Every Sunday, we sing, "Enter Rejoice and Come In,"

that includes the line, "Don't be afraid of some change." Because if identity is too rigid nothing new can enter, it is uncertainty that softens the edges of change. As the minister and spiritual anchor of All Faiths I encourage us to embrace the mystery of change that requires us to take the spiritual posture of mystics, poets, and children in trust of the unfolding.

2026 is here right next to our uncertainty, it is the moment that we surrender not as defeat but to make space for the moment when the ego stops gripping and something larger can move through. As we work to embrace change and the uncertainty of it, we must allow our habits, and rituals to stop being performance and become revelation and personal growth. That our perspective changes from feeling threatened to curiosity, from control to participation, from rigid identity to actually becoming, from closure to motion from fear of the unknown to relationship with

(continued on page 9)

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.)

January - Quality Life Center - Scholarships (Racial Equity Team)

February - Special Collection: Minister's Discretionary Fund

December Share the Plate raised \$6,069 for Employee Bonuses!

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



BOARD NOTES *by David Donovan, Board Chair*

"When injustice becomes law, resistance becomes duty."

— Martin Luther King, Jr.

As we step into a new year, I am deeply grateful for the energy, wisdom, and commitment that our All Faiths Unitarian community continues to bring to our shared work. The past year has been one filled with both challenges and possibilities - both for the Congregation as well as me. It has been a period of growth, self-reflection, and opportunity.

As Board Chair, I am honored to have shared this journey with you. I am proud of the work that we have accomplished and look forward to the path ahead.

January is a time for reflection and renewal, and this month's report offers both a look back at recent progress and a glimpse ahead to the opportunities before us.

Looking Back: 2025 in Reflection

- Membership - All Faiths has welcomed 29 new members this year. Accounting for members who have left us for various reasons, this represents a 14% increase overall membership since the beginning of the year. We are out in the community sharing who we are, collaborating in events that are making a difference.

- Building & Grounds - We have made many improvements to the facility, including:

- ✓ Replacement of damaged parts of our fence, fixed issues with the patio stones and pathways around the building.

- ✓ Installed a new hurricane resistant street sign with solar lighting.

- ✓ Purchased new office furniture for the Administrator & Minister as well as new tables and an umbrella for the patio.

- ✓ Painted the exterior of the building as well as inside the offices.

- ✓ Repurposed the existing sprinkler system to water the gardens.

- ✓ Repaved and re-striped the parking lot.

- ✓ Upgraded our Audio/Visual system and new choir mics

- ✓ Most significantly, we have successfully developed a Building Expansion plan to create a larger entryway and children and youth meeting space. We are currently out for quotes

- Outreach - Our Social Justice Teams have had a busy year. Significant activities include:

- ✓ Partnering with the QLC for various events.

- ✓ Attending 3 Pride events & hosting booths to represent All Faiths.

- ✓ Attending various protest marches (No Kings, Earth Day etc).

- ✓ Re-engaging with Lee Interfaith for Empowerment (LIFE) group.

- ✓ Achieving renewal of the UUA Welcoming Congregation for 2025.

- ✓ Hosting educational & training programs for the Congregation.

- ✓ Participating in the Compassionate Fort Myers Project to help develop plans to make the city a more compassionate place to work and live.

Miscellaneous Actions:

- ✓ As a result of our Membership Outreach, we are now home to the Girl Scout Troop #5050 and serve as their regular meeting place. In return, they help All Faiths with various volunteer efforts.

- ✓ We conducted a review of our facility and programs with the Sheriff's Office to improve security for our membership.

Looking Ahead: Priorities for 2026

Let's begin 2026 with action. Small steps today build the mountains you climb tomorrow. Let us dream boldly, plan clearly, act relentlessly to achieve our plans. This year, the Board will be working on some significant events that will move All Faiths into the future. These include:

1. The Ordination of our Minister. A Congregational meeting is scheduled for January 11th to amend the bylaws that will set the rules by which we can hold a vote for Ordination. A special committee will then start working on developing the plans to make this a reality.

2. The Board is looking forward to finalizing our work on the Building Expansion project. After the contractor quotes are received, we will hold a vote to approve the plans and start a Capital Campaign necessary to make this possible. This has been a long time in

the planning and is highly anticipated.

3. Founders Day 25th Anniversary. This will be a major milestone in the life of the Congregation. A lot of planning and preparation has been done to make this a special event.

4. All Faiths must continue to be a presence in the community. This is the only way to continue to grow our congregation and provide the outreach that is the Heart of who we are. Of special interest to me is starting a Hunger Team to help address the issue of Food Insecurity. This is something that is needed more than ever in today's climate and we can answer that call.

5. I am committed to hosting a Mini Golf event that will be a fundraiser as well as a way to showcase All Faiths to the neighborhood to increase membership. It is titled All Faiths - a Spring Spectacular.

6. On January 18th we will be holding a Job Fair event called "All Faiths in Action". Our intent is to showcase our various teams and committees and will be held on the patio after service in order to inform members of all the work that our teams are doing and hopefully attract more participation.

7. Continue to support initiatives that address climate justice, racial equity, and LG-BTQ+ inclusion.

8. Find new ways to explore opportunities and connect and collaborate with other organizations across the area.

(continued on page 9)

Happening at All Faiths

Happy January Birthday to you!



Jan 1 Shea Fierro
Jan 13 Joyce Schaffer
Jan 22 Susan Meissner
Jan 27 Lewis Robinson
Jan 28 Carsley Merrell
Jan 28 Fran Way

And Coming Up...

Jan 3 Alberita Johnson

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



Solos Luncheon!

Saturday, January 3, 2026
1:00 p.m.

Bonefish Grill
14261 S Tamiami Trail, Fort Myers,
FL 33912

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

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, cegeefm@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

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

Sunday Adult Ed. Workshops

Sundays at 9:15 a.m.

(The next adult education workshops are to be determined. Check emails and the newsletter for information when it becomes available). In the meantime, NewsTalk will resume at 9:15am on Sunday mornings. A forum for current affair discussions.

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 kennethmalkin@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.

January 2026

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|---|---|--|---|--|--|
| | | |  | 1 New Year's Day OFFICE CLOSED | 2 | 3 1pm Solos Lunch (Pg. 4) 7pm ACMA Concert (Pg. ?) |
| 4 9:15am News Talk 10:30am Service - No CYP 2-5pm ACMA Circle | 5 | 6 1:30pm-Zoom Climate Action Team Mtg. 5pm Girl Scouts | 7 7pm Fort Myers Camera Club | 8 5pm Choir Rehearsal | 9 2pm Dominoes | 10 7pm ACMA Concert (Pg. ?) |
| 11 9:30am Special Cong. Meeting 10:30am Service & CYP 12am Rainbow Mtg. 2-5pm ACMA Circle | 12 | 13 10am Racial Equity Meeting | 14 | 15 5pm Choir Rehearsal 6:30pm Sunday Service Team Zoom Mtg. 7pm Tamiami Tale Tellers | 16 10 am Finance Mtg. (rescheduled) | 17 10am Newcomer Orientation (Pg. 9) 7pm ACMA Concert (Pg. ?) |
| 18 9:15am News Talk 10:30am Service 12pm All Faiths in Action Event McGregor Clinic Collection | 19 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day OFFICE CLOSED | 20 1pm Board Mtg. 5pm Girl Scouts | 21 12pm Book Club (rescheduled) 7pm Fort Myers Camera Club | 22 5pm Choir Rehearsal | 23 2pm Dominoes | 24 1pm Membership Mtg. |
| 25 9:15am News Talk 10:30am Service New Member Recognition | 26 | 27 Parking Lot Closed for Sealcoating. | 28 Parking Lot Closed for Sealcoating. | 29 5pm Choir Rehearsal | 30 | 31 7pm ACMA Concert (Pg. ?) |

Visit our website for information on events and programs www.allfaithsuum.org

JANUARY 2026
SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICES
THEME: CHOOSING HOPE

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

Recorded services can be viewed at www.allfaithsuum.org
or on our YouTube channel.

Jan. 4 – The Way You See the World Matters

Speaker – Joyce Ramay
Worship Associate – Nicole Racine
Music by Carlos Garcia
Launch Pledge Dive – Ken Malkin

Jan. 11 – Guest Speaker – Andy Solis

Worship Associate – Regina Kilmartin
Music by Carlos Garcia & Choir
Pledge Drive Testimonial – Becky Ross

Jan. 18 – The Holy “No!” (MLK)

Speaker – Alberita Johnson
Worship Associate – Helen Dixon
Music by Carlos Garcia
Pledge Drive Testimonial – Jack Kennedy
McGregor Clinic Collection

Jan. 25 – Standing in the River

Speaker – Alberita Johnson
Worship Associate
Music by Carlos Garcia & Choir
Pledge Drive Testimonial – Cynthia Pulham Wolfe

NEWCOMERS ORIENTATION

*Hosted by Alberita Johnson
and the Membership Committee*
Saturday, January 17, 2026
10:00 a.m. — 12:00 p.m.

How much do you know about your congregation? How much do you know about Unitarian Universalism? Did you know that UU congregations are self-governing, and that authority and responsibility are vested in the membership of the congregation, or that we adopt our own bylaws, elect our own officers and approve our own budgets?

At All Faiths we want our members to understand what we believe in, what we strive for and what we celebrate. We encourage every member to participate actively in their faith community.

If you are a relatively new member and have joined All Faiths in the past two or three years, or maybe you're just thinking about becoming a member, we invite you to join us on Saturday, January 17, from 10-12pm for a fun and informative workshop that will bring you up to speed on the community you chose to become a part of. Contact: Carole Latino, Membership Co-Chair, at carolelatino@gmail.com.

Sign up on the bulletin board.

JANUARY CHILD & YOUTH PROGRAM

by Sharon Heinrich, CYP Director

In January we will lift up the UU principle of Justice as we explore the theme “Practicing Resistance”. Through stories, songs and activities we will try to understand when and how we should resist.

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

January 4: No CYP

January 11: Resisting Fitting In “The Emperor’s New Clothes” Lead, follow or go your own way game

January 18: Resisting Racism (MLK Day) “The Parable of the River” What is unfair? How do we help make things fair?

January 25: Resisting Monkey Mind “Taming the Monkey Mind” Focus on breath .

Closing: As we make our choices each day, may we make them with love at our center.

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.

NOTICE OF SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

**Sunday, January 11, 2026 – 9:30 a.m.
(Before Service)**

Members of All Faiths Unitarian Congregation, Inc. are invited to attend a Special Meeting of the Congregation, to vote on Bylaws Amendment.

Barb McFarlane, Secretary

SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING - JANUARY 11, 2026 9:30 A.M.

In the first step towards Ordination of our Commissioned Lay Minister, Alberita Johnson, the Board of Directors has called for a Special Meeting so that the Bylaws can be amended to include the following:

Change the Bylaw Article XI: MINISTER to add the following new section (in bold):

ARTICLE XI: MINISTER

Section 7. Ordination of a Lay, Interim, Developmental, Settled or Contract Minister

If the Board of Directors or the Members via a petition desire to consider ordination, of the Lay, Interim, Developmental, Settled or Contract Minister, a majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum for conducting such business. The Ordination must be approved by a vote of no less than 75 percent of the Members present at the specially called meeting for that purpose. Voting will be done consistent with Article VI CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS, SECTION 4 Voting and SECTION 5 Proxy.

ORDINATION PROCESS: see Pages 13 & 14

Vote on Ordination: Special Congregational Meeting on February 15, 2026, at 9:30am

Q&A Session: Sunday, February 8, 2026, at 9:30am

"In Covenant, We Grow"

We are a covenantal people,
bound not by perfection
but by promise—
the promise to walk together
even when the way is uneven.

We know that growth does not come
from fear or from public reckoning,
but from trust that the work of becoming
is already underway.

So we choose to notice
when words are spoken with care,
when emotion is held rather than released,
when patience replaces impulse,
and professionalism becomes a practice of love.

We believe in the inherent worth and dignity
of every person—
not as an abstract idea,
but as something lived, learned,
and sometimes struggled toward.
In the beloved community,
accountability is not punishment,
but accompaniment.
Forgiveness is not forgetting,
but faith in transformation.

Let us be generous witnesses
to one another's effort,
calling forth what is strongest and truest,
knowing that what we bless, we help to grow.

This is our way:
to expect much,
to forgive freely,
and to trust that grace,
patiently practiced,
can shape us all.

— Frank Geltner

RAINBOW CONNECTION NEWS

David Donovan, Chair

Happy New Year to everyone, and welcome back! I hope each of you had a wonderful Holiday break, filled with rest, laughter, and time with the people who matter most. A new year brings new opportunities and together, we will continue to build on our successes of the last couple of years.

In 2025, we achieved so much. We celebrated many milestones and “showed up” for each other and the LGBTQ+ Community in general. With your help we were able to renew our Welcoming Congregation program for the 2nd time. This is a significant achievement that not only honors LGBTQ+ milestones but is also a way to let everyone know that we are an open and welcoming congregation. It also is a way to educate and provide awareness of topics that our members may not have known.

We strengthened ties with local LGBTQ+ organizations by actively participating in various Pride events in the community and supporting programs like the Interfaith Alliance of SWFL and St John the Apostle MCC Church. These partnerships remind us that our work is part of a larger movement for justice. This year, we hope to continue our sponsorship of the Cape Coral Pride again. We have committed to enter an All Faiths Pride Float in the parade.

All Faiths also was honored to be able to host a section of the National AIDS Memorial Quilt earlier in the year. In fact, a family of one of the names on the quilt came to visit the quilt and was very moved by our showing. This was a once in a lifetime opportunity and serves as a solemn reminder of the people who lost their lives to the scourge of AIDS.

Last year, due to a very generous congregation, our Share the Plate collections raised \$455 in June and \$375 in October for the Rainbow Connection team. Our second annual Lasagna Luncheon is expected to provide an additional \$800. All proceeds are in support of Cape Coral Pride.

It was a huge honor that All Faiths was allowed to host a panel of the AIDS Quilt

One memory from last year that I was so honored to be a part of, was when we honored our Trans and Drag brothers and sisters in the Black and Latino community by hosting a Dance Party where everyone dressed up to honor their lives as depicted in the mini-series POSE. It was so great to see all the fun.

As we step into 2026, All Faiths Unitarian Congregation continues to live into our promise of being a Welcoming Congregation—not as a static label, but as an ongoing, active commitment. January is a natural time for reflection and renewal, and for The Rainbow Connection Team, it's also a

time to ask: How can we deepen our welcome, strengthen our advocacy, and nurture our community in the year ahead?

In a world where LGBTQ+ rights and dignity are still contested and marginalized in many places, our congregation's commitment to inclusion is both a spiritual practice and a form of public witness. It is a way of saying, in word and deed, that every person is sacred, every identity is worthy, and every love is a blessing.

I'm excited to see what the Rainbow Connection will accomplish this year. I appreciate all the energy and engagement from the team as we continue to grow and do great things in the community. Let's make this our best year yet!



RACIAL EQUITY TEAM NEWS

by Carole Latino, Co-Chair

First, I must say I was so proud to see the great group that showed up for our last Racial Equity Team meeting. Lewis Robinson resigned at the previous meeting and I was nominated to take his place as Co-Chair. I'm also happy to welcome Lodovic Kimble to the table to join us. He has worked with our community on several occasions and is a retired Professor. I feel that with Lodovic's background he is a perfect fit for our group. I am confident we will be moving forward with the Racial Equity Team and growing.

It's not the black folk that have to fix racism. The only people that can eradicate racism are the white people. We have to call out racism when its ugly head appears. This is going to be a long journey, but a worthwhile one.

So please come and join us this coming January 13th at 10 a.m. We meet once a month on the second Tuesday at 10 a.m.

'Hope' is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul
And sings the tune without the words
And never stops
At all

— Emily Dickinson



DESTINATION JOY *(continued from pg. 2)*

the unknown.

This new year will usher in change, updates to our bylaws so All Faiths can ordain, our 25th Anniversary, creating a larger space for our Children and Youth programming and meeting room, and enlarging our entry way, departing and new Board members, beautification of our building and Grounds, and probably two Sunday services. And I am sure much more, as we move through the year.

Family, we can hold all of this, by continuing our rituals, assembling together, and imagining. This is our Beloved Community, we are responsible for her rise and fall. For us to meet the moment, let us continue to give of our Time, our Talents and our Treasures. It takes a village.

My prayer for you in this year of 2026, Everyday, in every way may all your needs be met.

Amen and Ashe

Happy Kwanzaa and Happy New Year Family, I love you!
We are on this journey together.

All aboard...Destination Joy.

Love, Minister Albie

BOARD NOTES *(continued from pg. 3)*

A Call to Engagement

The work of the All Faiths Board is not separate from the life of our congregation — it is an extension of it. Soon, you will all be invited to look into your hearts and determine how much All Faiths, and the work we do, is worth to you. A Stewardship Pledge Drive will soon be kicking off to allow us to meet our commitments for the next fiscal year and insure that we continue to grow and do the AWESOME work that we do. It will be called “Growing our Spiritual Garden” and you will hear more in the coming weeks.

The Board is here to serve, to listen, and to lead in partnership with you. I invite you to stay connected, ask questions, and share your vision for our shared future. The strength of our faith & tradition lies in our collective wisdom and our willingness to imagine boldly.

As we begin 2026, may we remember that our covenant calls us not only to care for one another but also to act together for justice and compassion in the world.

Respectfully yours,

David J. Donovan,
Board Chair

Happy New Year Wishes

2026-'27 STEWARDSHIP DRIVE

by Ken Malkin, Chair

The Stewardship Committee has been planning All Faiths' 2026-27 Pledge Campaign. The theme is ***Growing Our Spiritual Garden***. The kick-off will be January 11th. Pledge cards will be sent electronically, can be picked up at church on Sunday; can be found on All Faiths' website, allfaithsuum.org, or will be mailed to those without computer access.

By pledging, the Finance Committee and All Faiths' Board of Directors can plan expenditures for the upcoming fiscal year. You can give your contribution in a manner that best suits your budget: in one lump sum or by breaking your payment into monthly, weekly or quarterly payments.

Your support is always appreciated. Remember: no pledge is too big or too small.

CLIMATE ACTION TEAM NEWS

by Joan Marshall, Co-Chair



Your Climate Action Team faced new challenges last year as the Trump administration acted to halt or even reverse government programs addressing the ever-increasing impact of climate change on our nation and the world.

Still, we remain undeterred in our commitment to the fundamental UU principle, “Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.”

In 2026 we will continue to connect with other organizations in our efforts to help mitigate the increasingly destructive impact of climate change both now and in the future. In our December meeting we discussed specific areas of concern where we can focus our efforts to promote positive action. These include: (1) an outreach to young people, beginning with the Girl Scout Troop that meets at All Faiths, (2) promoting the use of solar energy for our schools and other government facilities, (3) addressing the issue of air pollution, specifically from the incinerators used for our trash, (4) educating ourselves and others about the threats of plastics pollution to both our environment and our bodies.

Our CAT meetings take place on Zoom at 1:30 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month. We urge you to join us with your suggestions and ideas for how we can most effectively reach out to others and engage them in this struggle to protect and preserve the planet that both we and all future generations must depend upon.

JOYS & SORROWS

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

Doug Cartwright is doing better after having his big toe amputated. We hope that he continues to flourish.

Louise Close celebrated the return to her restored home on Fort Myers Beach. When Ian hit, she learned that her son's wife was pregnant. 3 years later, when they returned to their home, she learned that they were having another daughter – she calls them her "bookends".

Carlos Garcia expressed appreciation to the Bob and Fran Way family for their donation that enabled us to acquire the choir robes.

Annely Hudanick expressed her joy that her vision has improved enough so that she can drive again.

Dottie Mayol has been diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis. We hope that she will be given beneficial treatment.

Jeff Moran had shoulder replacement surgery. We hope that he has a good recovery.

Jeff and Eileen Moran's daughter is continuing to struggle with cancer. Their other daughter's husband was hospitalized. We hope their family finds beneficial healing.

Michael Pierre expressed his joy that his tumor has not grown and that he is still alive and with us for the holidays.

Frank Stephens, our Mr. Hospitality, celebrated his fourth Christmas in his home by inviting people to a fourth holiday party there.

Holiday Decorations – We are grateful to our members who bought and installed our new holiday decorations.

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

We are Each Other's Keepers

Joyce Ramay,

Care and Support Coordinator

OPERATION JOY

The Final Chapter

December 15th was the final event for Operation Joy.

Thanks to your generous donations, we were able to make many children happy over the past 14 years.

It was a pleasure and honor to be able to spread joy to our local children and families in need.

Thank you!

Annely Hudanick & the Operation Joy Members

TREASURER'S REPORT

by John Conrad, Treasurer

Cash Assets – November 2025

| | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| First Horizon Checking | \$ 3,345 |
| Raymond James Legacy | 5,189 |
| Live Oak Operating Reserve (CD) | 23,864 |
| First Horizon Capital Reserve | 1,726 |
| Live Oak Capital Reserve (S) | 31,884 |
| Live Oak Operating Reserve (S) | 32,504 |
| Live Oak Legacy (CD) | 22,534 |
| Live Oak Legacy Savings | 30,341 |
| Total | \$151,386 |
| Prior Month | <u>158,154</u> |
| Net Gain/Loss | (\$ - 6,768) |

November 2025 Profit & Loss

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Operating Income | \$ 12,046 |
| Operating Expense | <u>17,390</u> |
| Net Gain/Loss | (\$ - 5,344) |

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 November, we received \$9,167 in pledge giving towards our Not Alone Pledge Drive. And in the last fiscal year, \$28,413 was received for the Not Alone pledge drive.

Year to date (since April 1), our pledge giving has totaled \$102,174, while we budgeted \$134,726.00 (75.8%).

The only unusual expense incurred in the General Fund Operating Account during November was \$841 for Website fees.

November's Interest Income was \$391.

Between September and November, \$10,000.00 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 November monthly transfer/deposit of \$1,640 to the Live Oak Capital Reserve account was made.

In November, \$1,011 was collected for Operation Joy.



ACMA LIVE MUSIC SCHEDULE! *It's All About the Music!*

Saturday, January 3, 2026 - 7:00pm

The Reckless Saints, in Concert!

Bob Williams Opens

Saturday, January 10, 2026 - 7:00pm

The Florida Cracker Collective Tour

Grant Peoples, Larry Magnum Doug Spears

Saturday, January 17, 2026 - 7:00pm

Nora Jane Struthers, in Concert

Bill Frey Opens

Saturday, January 31, 2026 - 7:00pm

Heather Pierson Duo

Clark Johnson Opens

The Listening Room at All Faiths

2756 McGregor Blvd., Fort Myers, Florida
General public \$20/Member discount \$15

Donations at the Door

Visit : americanacma.org for more concert information.

SAVE THE DATES!

Monday, January 19: MLK Day Commemorative March and Rally

Sign up on the bulletin board to march and/or staff the All Faiths table.

Saturday, February 21: ALL FAITHS CELEBRATES ITS 25th ANNIVERSARY!

Mark your calendars for this one. We will host a super celebration at Tara Woods Club House in North Fort Myers. Stay tuned for more details. Tickets will go on sale beginning January 4th.

Saturday, March 14: JUNK-IN-THE-TRUNK

Start cleaning out your closets, garage and attics! We will hold another Junk-in-the-Trunk sale at All Faiths in March. Save the date.



Ending the year on a warm and peaceful note, Joseph Brauer graced us with his calm and soothing voice as he performed a Winters Night by Candlelight concert on December 12. It is always a special treat to have him sing for us.



As 2025 comes to a close, I invite you to take a moment to look at the names on page 12 of this newsletter and reflect with gratitude on all the people who make All Faiths what it is. From our minister to our sexton, these are the dedicated individuals who keep our community thriving. And behind them, lifting them up every day, is an entire village of members and friends who generously share their time, talent, and treasure in support of our mission.

Together, we are making our community—and the world—a better place.

Thank you, and Happy New Year!

~ Regina



Ice Cream Social

Next one on January 25, 2026
Sponsored by Lewis Robinson



Founders' Day Silver Jubilee!

*Tickets go on sale Sunday, January 4, 2026
Payment and RSVP must be received
by February 15, 2026*

This year, as we celebrate our 25th Anniversary, we invite you to contribute to All Faiths' Capital Fund. These additional gifts will support the renovation of our Community Room and the expansion of our Vestibule. Permits have already been secured, and the project is currently out to bid with local contractors.

This effort began more than a year ago with generous seed money from a devoted congregant, along with legacy gifts from the estate of Carol and Ed Elrod. Their kindness helped set this vision in motion.

Your generosity today will help launch All Faiths into its next quarter century. We are deeply grateful to all our past and present members and friends for sustaining our spiritual home and helping our community continue to grow and thrive.

All Faiths Unitarian Congregation

2756 McGregor Blvd., Fort Myers, Florida 33901

Phone: (239) 226-0900 – Email: office@allfaithsuum.org – Website: www.allfaithsuum.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

Circles of Care

Susan Snow

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

L.I.F.E.

Ken Malkin

Barb McFarlane

JoAnn Hilliard

Cindy Thompson

Mano a Mano

Charlotte Blitt

Solos Group

Annely Hudanick

Animal Ministry

Sharon Gray

Rainbow Connection

David Donovan

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



Deadline for the **January** Issue of *Connections*
is **December 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

INFORMATION REGARDING ALL FAITHS MINISTER AND ORDINATION

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 currently 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 has been scheduled for January 11, 2026 to amend our Bylaws regarding this.

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 fellowshipped 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 being ordained, but it is not about that person. Rather, it is a transformational experience in which the total congregation evolves together.
- C. 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”.
- D. In essence, Ordination in the UU church is a deeply communal act where a covenant body of people formally recognizes, affirms, and commissions one of its own to religious leadership and service.
- E. The Minister commits to leading and caring for the congregation, and the congregation commits to supporting the minister and their shared work.
- F. 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.

If the Bylaw change on January 11, 2026 is approved, when would a vote on ordination take place?

- The Board of Directors has scheduled a vote on ordination for Sunday, February 15, 2026. Formal notice for the special congregational meeting would 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.