



## A Spirit of Gratitude and Hope

When I was ten years old, I learned that I needed glasses. While I remember the shock of seeing leaves on trees for the first time, what I remember more profoundly was wearing my glasses to dance class.

In my mind, I was an extraordinary dancer. I knew what felt right in my body, and—because I could not see myself as anything but a blob in the mirrors surrounding us—I was able to rely solely on how dancing felt.

But when I showed up to dance class in my glasses, I learned that my dancing body did not look at all like I imagined. What had felt just-right was revealed to be awkward or wrong—my knees were too bent, or my elbows too high, or my head too crooked. While I am certain that my dancing “improved” when my vision did, I am equally certain that my dancing changed. I was more self-conscious and hesitant. I was less able to rely on what I knew felt right.

In recent years, I started to dream several times a week about dance. In the fifteen years since I have danced, my body has changed dramatically due to normal aging, illness, and chronic health conditions. The thought of dancing again after multiple surgeries was intimidating. I was unsure of how (or if) my body would move, and how (or if) my body would be able to generate and sustain movements. Regardless, I took the frightening leap of registering for an adult dance class—having no idea what to expect.

When I got home from my first class, my partner asked how it went. “I was terrible,” I laughed. “And it was so good.” Dancing again has meant unlearning all the rules and judgment and expectations I carried, and learning how to move my body in the ways that feel right. Amazingly, my body remembers how ten-year-old me felt before I got glasses. My internal sense of rightness, of grace, of strength has persisted all these years.

I wish ten-year-old me had known how to love the terrible moves—the bent knees, the crooked head, the too-high elbows, the scars, the glasses, the things my body will not do. Embodying myself, focusing only on what feels right, allowing myself to be terrible at a thing I love is the ultimate act of self-care. Embodying all of me is the best way I know to love the world.

*Cont. p2*

*“The harder things are to say, the more necessary they are to say.”*

Adrienne Maree Brown



## The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Jonesboro

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### Board Members

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Jennifer Clay, Vice President

Betty Stafford, Treasurer

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### Newsletter

Betty Stafford, Editor

Jennifer Clay, Layout

# SEPTEMBER FELLOWSHIP

The Fellowship meets on Sundays at Temple Israel, 203 W. Oak Ave., Jonesboro. Fellowship starts at 10 a.m. followed by the sacred coffee and discussion ending at noon.

## September 1 - No Services

## September 8 - Annual Ingathering and Water Communion.

You are invited to bring a small container of water collected from a special place in your travels, or closer to home, that represents particular meaning in your life. All our waters will be gathered in a common vessel, and participants are welcome to share something of their inner or outer journeys.

- Peanut Butter Sunday - Your continued generosity toward those in need in our community with a gift of nutritious PB is a welcome addition to the shelves of Helping Neighbors. The Fellowship's August donation was 24 lbs.

## September 15 - How do we find the things that matter most?

How do we find the things that matter most? Norman Stafford will help us conceive of a religious life beyond belief.

- Music will be led by our Music Committee.
- Let's share a Pot Luck lunch after services this day.

## September 22 - What does it mean if a UU says they are a spiritual person?

This service, featuring Karen Yanowitz, will explore some of UU history in terms of spirituality, what the UUA says about spirituality now, and how we as modern UUs can practice spirituality in our lives.

- Will and Jonah baby dedication

## September 29 - Fellowship Visionary Day

What are your hopes for the future of our fellowship?

Join us as Jennifer Clay leads an interactive activity focused on the growth and future of our fellowship. We invite you to come prepared with your dreams and wishes—whether big or small. For discussion, we will host a panel discussion with members of the board to explore our current growth and what it will take to achieve our shared visions.

## THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP OF JONESBORO WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

We come together in freedom,  
for pursuit of truth,  
service to humanity,  
and fulfillment of self.



## A Spirit of Gratitude and Hope *Cont. from p1*

May we find the courage to attune to our smart and powerful bodies. May we know the ways we collectively thrive when we bring our whole selves to any place. As we unlearn what does not serve and relearn embodiment and joy, may we experience the freedom of our fullest selves.

*Rev. Dr. Laura Solomon (she/her) is minister at the UU Church of Reading, MA*

# Welcome to the “BER” Months



## NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Latin Keys: A Piano Tribute to Hispanic Heritage

Immerse yourself in the rich musical traditions of Latin America as talented pianists perform both classical and popular pieces by renowned Latin American composers.

Performance is Saturday, September 21, 2024, in Riceland Hall, at ASU's Fowler Center, 5-7pm. After the performances, you are welcome to stay for a festive reception and savor the spirit of the occasion.

### The Fellowship Board will meet at 1:00 PM on September 29, 2024.

Members of the fellowship may submit topics to the board agenda in writing 14 days prior to meeting.

### The Worship Committee will meet at 12:00 PM on September 29, 2024.

## Sharing Our Presence and Resources

The days of knocking on your neighbor's door for a cup of sugar appear to be gone. Social media posters often complain about our reluctance to lend a free hand, that the “it takes a village” mindset is dead. The size of our networks decreased during the pandemic, and Americans rely less on friends than before. Apps give us more ways to get things done, e.g., rideshare services and gig-work platforms.

But these tools can also “sacrifice human interaction,” says Xuan Zhao, a Stanford psychology researcher. With loneliness epidemics occurring worldwide, shunning our community not only runs counter to human nature but may be worse for our health.

Our innate ability to cooperate and socialize with other human beings may date back more than 3.5 million years to one of the earliest hominins, the australopithecines. When they split from other primates, from rainforests to drier and “predator-rich” environments, australopithecines needed large groups to survive. They learned to work with those who weren't biologically related to them, enabling strategy, weapon development, and formations of large mobs to chase tough predators.

When these hominins became bipedal, giving birth became more laborious and dangerous and likely incentivized mothers to aid each other in childbirth. Early humans relied on family members outside the mother to help raise and teach the baby. Members behaved in this way to be accepted in the group, and the baby, aware of its multiple caregivers, learned to observe, socialize, and ingratiate with non-family members.

Psychologists argue that our evolution is why social rejection and isolation are painful to us today. In fact, brain circuits where emotional pain is processed are built on paths that experience physical pain. The discomfort of social exclusion is a signal for us to rectify that rejection.

Help and social connections make us feel better. A vital indicator of positive mental health is our ability to picture a social safety network—whether we use it or not. When we allow someone else to pitch in, we offload some of the cognitive effort and move through that stressor. Even with no resolution, receiving support and validation can reap health benefits. People reported feeling less pain if they were holding a partner's hand during a challenging experience.

Others are more happy to help us than we think. Why? Because helping gives us purpose. It unlocks an experience of kindness to flow from one person to another, making us feel much better than we would have otherwise.

*Annika Hom, National Geographic, 8/22/24*

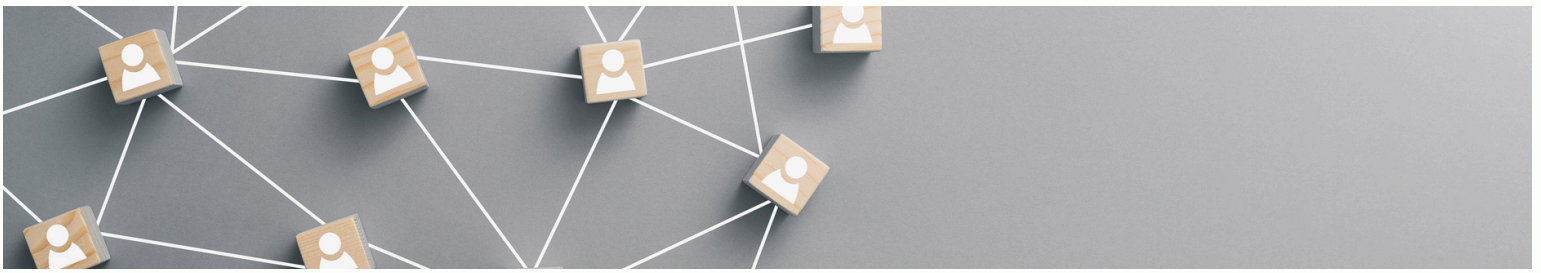


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## Our Interdependent Web

In July 2024, Walmart, Inc., started working with Denali Corp., based in Russellville, AR, which has developed technology called Zero De-Pack. Usually the process of separating food waste from its packaging is done manually by Walmart employees. This new process separates expired perishable foods, such as produce, meat, and bakery items, from its packaging. Food waste decomposing in landfills produces methane, a potent greenhouse gas. Denali recycles the food waste it collects as organic material that can be made into other useful products, such as animal feed, compost, fertilizer, and clean energy.

Zero De-Pack equipment is located in the back of Walmart stores. Employees toss the item in the receptacle, and Denali's technology separates the food from its packaging with "impressive accuracy," according to RJ Zanes, vice-president of facility services for Walmart U.S. The company has implemented Zero De-Pack at more than 1,400 of its stores and Sam's Clubs, and plans to expand it into more next year.

Zero DePack has raised the volume of potentially reusable organic content recovered from Walmart by more than 60%. It also cut Walmart's compactor trash by about 12%. Walmart wants to minimize operational waste, recycle, and donate what it can. Walmart hopes Zero De-Pack will move it closer to its long-term sustainability goals.

Of retail food waste, 51% went to landfills and 39.5% went to compost and anaerobic digestion. Denali says it provides de-packaging and recycling services to thousands of grocers, food manufacturers, distributors, and cities nationwide, and recycles more than 1 billion pounds of food waste annually.

According to the national nonprofit ReFED, the U.S. generated about 77.6 million tons of food waste in 2022. About 3.9% of that is retailers' damaged or expired items that can't be sold to consumers. Unexpired food products may also be unsalable—customer returns that can't be restocked or donated, damaged packaging, or other quality issues. ReFED said Denali's deunpacking process has the potential to change those numbers by keeping more food waste out of landfills.

*Serenah MC Kay, AR Democrat-Gazette, 8/2/24*

*We need not to  
think alike to  
love alike.*



**UU World**