



## A Spirit of Gratitude and Hope

“Excuse me, young lady.” I heard a quiet, familiar voice behind me in a parking lot. Sure enough, I recognized the slight man, with his head full of white hair and his plaid shirt. For years, he was a produce manager at a local grocery store. When my shopping coincided with his shift, he’d offer his kind smile and ask if I wanted to hear a poem. I always answered yes, and he’d recite short, sincere poems. It always made my day brighter.

He now engaged me with a silly joke, both of us laughing, before he rummaged through a box in his car to produce a spiral-bound book. “This is my gift to you, fresh from my publisher.”

We’d met many times before, but I hadn’t seen him for quite some time and often wondered about him. I told him what joy he’d brought to my life in each of these short interactions.

He smiled and said, “Well, I hope you’ll write me a letter and let me know what you think of my life’s work.” Then we parted, Joseph and I... me gently carrying his life’s work in my hands.

There are so many ways to hate. There are so many ways to be angry, and to seek out differences with the people around us.

There are also many ways to connect. There are so many ways to love and to find joy; so many opportunities to regard life from a different perspective.

I don’t know what political party Joseph is affiliated with, I don’t know if he has a religious identity, or what neighborhood he lives in. But what I do know is that he, like me, has a deep desire to connect with people, to share his joy, to exist in a world where a mere stranger is delighted to hear his poetry.

What a gift it was to see him today—to connect deeply with a stranger because he felt brave enough to share a piece of their soul with me.

I believe that all of us together can and will create a beautiful, courageous, and joy-filled world as long as we continue to hold love at the center of who we are.

Let us to lead with love, and find small, everyday ways to connect with the strangers we meet. Let us have the courage to share the poetry of our hearts with all those we encounter. May it be so, and may we be the ones to make it so.

*Rev. Jo VonRue, May Memorial UU Society, Syracuse, NY*

“Blessed is the season which engages the whole world in a conspiracy of love.”

Hamilton Wright Mabie



## The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Jonesboro

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### Board Members

Dr. Karen Yanowitz, President

Jennifer Clay, Vice President

Betty Stafford, Treasurer

Sue Garrison, Secretary

### Newsletter

Betty Stafford, Editor

Jennifer Clay, Layout

# DECEMBER & JANUARY 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. [Any cancelations for inclement weather will be sent out via email and posted to our Social Media Pages.](#)

## December 1

10, 9, 8, 7.... sound familiar? Lots of countdowns this time of year! I'll be talking about the psychology of anticipation and how countdowns can be a mindful experience.

## December 8

Start off your holiday season with the UU Winter Holiday party! Lots of fun activities and enjoyment. We will start at 10:30 and there will be no formal childcare program.

## December 15

Norman Stafford will explore "Just How Lucky Are We?" Adapted from a sermon by Jim Lyonfields, a member of Emerson UU Chapel, St. Louis, MO, Norm will examine privilege and the various ways we possess it, some not even recognized.

Please note: We will not have our 3rd Sunday Potluck this week since our Holiday party was last week.

## December 22

**No Services**

## December 29

Planning for the New Year. Jennifer Clay will lead a short service on prepping for the 2025 year. Bring your calendars, journals, planners, digital planners, pens, stickers, highlighters, all the fun things and we will spend our discussion time sharing planning ideas! Don't have a planner, we have plenty of supplies to share! Dollar Tree has some great 2025 calendars!

## January 5

Join us on January 5th for our New Year's Brunch at 10am at the Temple. Bring your favorite breakfast/brunch dish to share with the fellowship. We will not be having services this day.

## January 12

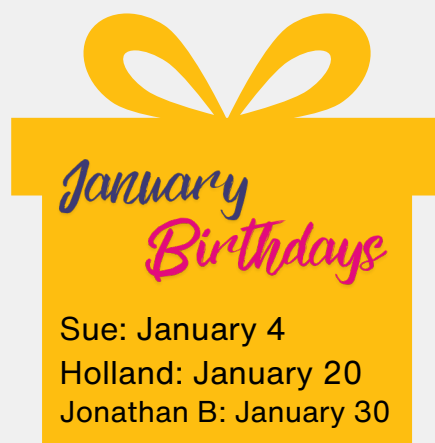
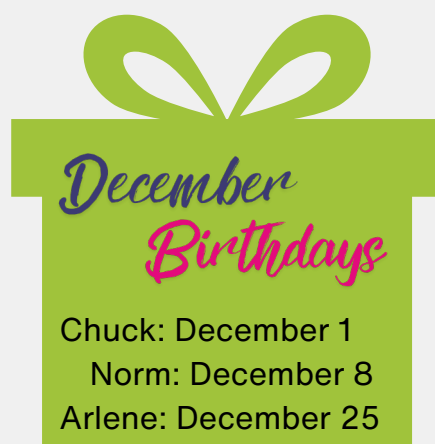
Service topic TBD. - Peanut Butter Sunday

## January 19

Service topic TBD. - Potluck to follow fellowship

## January 26

Service topic TBD. - Board meeting to follow.



## 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.

# NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS



## Dismantling Systemic Oppression

Welcome a Guest at Your Table, by placing therein a few coins at your meal time. Donation boxes are available at the Temple, or you may donate directly to UUSC on its website. Guest at Your Table is the UU Service Committee's major annual fund-raiser.



## No services December 22nd.

We will not have services on December 22nd. We also will not have our monthly board meeting on the 22nd.



## Peanut Butter Sunday - December 8th and January 12:

Your continued generosity toward those in need in our community with a gift of nutritious PB is a welcome addition to Helping Neighbors' shelves.



## January 5 - New Year's Brunch

Join us on January 5th for our New Year's Brunch at 10am at the Temple. Bring your favorite breakfast/brunch dish to share with the fellowship. We will not be having services this day.



## January 26 - The Fellowship Board meets at noon.

If you would like to add anything to the agenda, please let Karen know before January 16th.



## January 26 - The Fellowship Board meets at noon.

Please make sure your information is up-to-date by filling out our membership form below. Donation letters will be going out after the first of the year.

Link: <https://form.jotform.com/240058073687057>

QR Code to Scan:



A big congrats to Zach and Julianna for winning the inaugural UU Chili Cookoff... by a landslide!



*Love is the power that holds us together and is at the center of our shared values.*

## The Great Web of Life

Trying to decide whether to buy wild caught salmon or the hatchery variety? Salmon hatcheries produce millions of juveniles, elevating the total number available for harvest. Prince William Sound, Alaska, hosts one of the world's largest hatchery programs for pink salmon. Harvests increased from 4 million to 50 million annually from the 1960s to recent years.

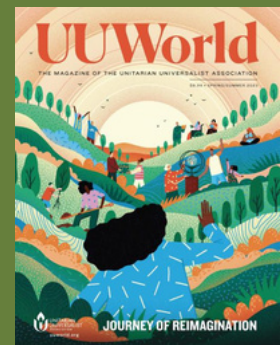
However, the ecological impacts of escaped hatchery salmon on the fitness of wild populations are unclear. Mathematical models were developed by Samuel May and others at the University of Alaska to study the effects of hatchery-origin pink salmon strays on wild population productivity. These models focused on the return dates of fish to spawning streams, a critical parameter for fitness.

Hatchery fish produce about half as many offspring as wild fish when spawning in the wild. But a question is whether mixing hatchery and wild fish matters, and if so, how and in what ways. A prevailing hypothesis is that hatchery fish introduce alleles not adapted to local environments, which might reduce wild population sizes. In May's simulations, natural selection stabilized the wild population, with the demographic gain far out-weighting the cost. Hatchery strays are making the wild population larger than they otherwise would be.

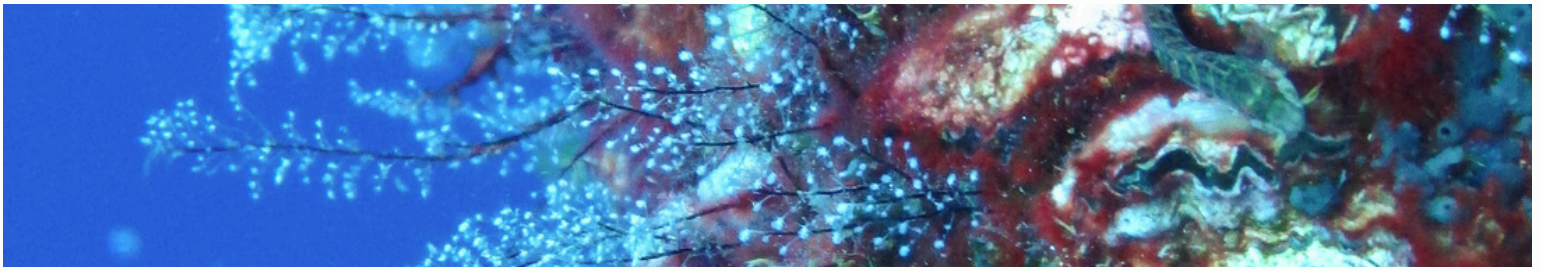
However, demographic gains come at a cost. Genetic mixing between wild and hatchery fish reduced variation in return timing by up to 20%. Diversity among natural populations is key to resilience. The work of May and colleagues highlighted a societal trade-off for managers—balancing the needs of conserving wild diversity with economic productivity and food security.

*Lesley Evans Ogden, Natural History, 10/24*

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



**UU World**



## Embracing Our Differences and Commonalities

From improving focus to strengthening cognitive pathways, handwriting offers neurological benefits that modern technology can't replicate. Think back to the last time you jotted down a quick note or made a grocery list. Chances are, it wasn't with pen and paper. Over the past decade, keyboards and screens have quietly replaced handwriting in our daily routines. Yet, research shows that putting pen to paper offers cognitive benefits that digital tools can't replicate.

From improved memory retention to enhanced learning outcomes, maintaining the art of handwriting can significantly impact how we absorb and retain information. Multiple senses are engaged in the writing process. Holding a pen with our fingers, pressing it on a surface, and moving our hands to create letters and words is a complex cognitive-motor skill requiring our attention.

Mapping sounds to letter formation supports reading and spelling in children. Learning a new word involves connecting an abstract symbol with information on the visual, motor, and auditory levels. Handwriting activates more connections across these different dimensions compared with typing.

A survey of 205 YAs in the U.S. and Europe found that many students report more focus, steadier concentration, and better memory when producing a text by holding a writing instrument rather than pressing keys on a keyboard, suggesting the vital role that our sense of touch plays in our ways of absorbing information.

To better understand how our senses influence our cognition, think of the brain as a road system. In children these systems are like faint and winding paths in a forest. With practice and experience these paths can become motorways connecting different parts of the brain to transport information fast and efficiently.

In several studies, researchers found that the whole brain was active when writing by hand, while much smaller areas are active when typing, suggesting that writing by hand uses most of the brain to get the job done.

Moreover, studies have shown that the different parts of the brain activated by handwriting communicated with each other through brain waves associated with learning. A whole body of research talks about alpha and theta oscillations in the brain that are beneficial for learning and remembering. Oscillations were active during handwriting but not during typing.

As a result, researchers are encouraging the preservation of handwriting skills. In the U.S., cursive was removed from the Common Core Standard, but several states decided to return it to the curricula because of its benefits. Adults should be encouraged to use pen and paper too. This exercise of the brain is equivalent to doing maintenance work on a busy road.

*Victoria Traverso, National Geographic, 9/26/24*

N.B., Arkansas law (2015) requires that public schools teach cursive writing to students by the end of third grade. Some say it's important to maintain the state's roots; others believe cursive is antiquated. Local school districts decide how to handle cursive instruction. Some districts dropped handwriting instruction after adopting Common Core standards, choosing to focus on other parts of the curriculum.



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