



UUCFM Office Manager <officemanager@uucfm.org>

UUCFM September Monthly Communicator

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Sarah Houghton <officemanager@uucfm.org>
To: Test sarah Houghton <officemanager@uucfm.org>

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The Communicator

September, 2024

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Volunteer of the Month



Our September Volunteer of the Month is Jeff Letts. Gauch Award winner, Jeff is not resting on his laurels. How lucky we all feel when we hear Jeff playing the organ in our worship services! Besides being a wonderful musician, Jeff is a warm, fun, and helpful presence around the place. He spent many Saturdays working on the Respectful Relations Committee and now is on the Futures Committee. Oh, and his brownies at potlucks are to die for.



Spotlight on the Board

First in a series

Sue Roth - VP Stewardship

Sue Roth's mother impressed on her a story from when she was a baby. Her father was going out to buy rolls when something came over the radio that stopped everyone cold. It was the attack on Pearl Harbor. Her father did buy the rolls, but the next day he enlisted in the Navy. She and her mother went to California with him when he shipped out. In San Francisco an officer allayed her mother's fears by saying, "No matter what, we're saving your husband." The officer's words proved true. By the time Sue's father came back little Sue was almost five. Sue still remembers when he threw off his hat and hugged her.

During her childhood, Sue went back and forth from Long Island, where she was born, to the Baltimore area. Her father was in insurance, and her mother, a graduate of the New York Conservatory of Music, sang opera. Sue herself had an outstanding voice when she was young, and she remembers being part of a powerful twosome when she went caroling with her mother at Christmas time. When Sue was 12, her family definitively moved to Long Island.

Her family took her to Sunday School in mainline protestant churches when they lived in the small Maryland town of Lutherville. When a Sunday School teacher told her that if she wasn't a "good girl," she would go to hell, her horrified parents pulled her out of that class. Because her father thought that the

Lutherville public school was a fire trap, they sent her to a Catholic school for four years. It was only after the move that her family decided to give Unitarianism a try.

Sue took to this faith and became active in the Liberal Religious Youth group, eventually becoming the LRY president.

At UUCFM, we think of Sue as half of the power couple Len and Sue. Both were widowed, and they found each other because Len was referred to her as a financial adviser by a mutual friend and fellow member of their UU congregation.

Sue was married for 38 years to an engineer who worked behind the scenes at the Houston Space Center. He was testing director for lunar exercises, so Sue spent a few years in Houston. Once she told a Jewish joke, which she thought was funny, but someone was offended and told her that as a non-Jew she was not to tell Jewish jokes. Her husband was Jewish, and she converted to Judaism. Why? "So I could tell Jewish jokes." Of course.

Sue was busy as a wife and as the mother of her son, Steve, for many years. Still, she always wanted to be a nurse. She went back to school and at 43, she graduated. Her career as a nurse was varied. She got a

position as a flow nurse at Suburban Hospital. This means that she was sent wherever she was needed. "This was a GREAT GREAT GREAT education." At the same time, she wanted more experience as a psychiatric nurse, and she worked a second job in the psychiatric unit at Montgomery General Hospital. One of Sue's most obvious attributes is persistence. She went on to become a board certified psychiatric nurse. She learned from her mother to never give up.

Len and Sue maintain a busy lifestyle, going back and forth between here and Maryland. Her main source of fun is sitting around with Len kidding around and doing wordle and the like. She got a card from Len with a Flamingo on roller skates that said, "You make the fun, funner." They have a large extended family with kids, step-kids, grandkids and great grandkids. (I lost count.)

Sue felt at home at UUCFM from the start. "It was and continues to be a very warm, welcoming congregation. I feel that everyone is welcome. It is very important to me that UUCFM grow and thrive."

Here is a little snippet of our conversation.

Marge: Sue, you seem to have a thing for Jewish men.

Sue: Big time.



Creating a Culture of Generosity

(www.bit.ly/UUCFMgiving)

Author Vernon Howard writes about “a cooling breeze flowing through an open window on a hot day.” He must have been thinking about using our new Breeze giving options on a summer day in Fort Myers! Not only can you exercise your generosity on an open computer Window, but you can also experience our cool Breeze on your smart phone. Any time. Anywhere. From any device.

You, your generosity, and our Congregation are now at your fingertips, literally! Try our new ways to live-out your stewardship with (Br)eeze:

- At our giving page – open your browser window to www.bit.ly/UUCFMgiving from your desktop, laptop, or smartphone.

□ “Text to Give” – From your texting app on your smart phone or tablet, to the phone number 239-388-3232, text your donation, examples:

“\$10” , will send \$10 to our general operating fund

“\$25 Sharing” , will send \$25 to this month’s sharing partner

“20 MDF” , will send \$20 to the Minister’s Discretionary Fund.

(If you make a mistake, just text “Refund” and the previous donation will be reversed.)

□ At the UUCFM.org website – Click on the blue donate button.

And of course, mailing a check to UUCFM is always appreciated!

So, during the Sunday Offering, if you don’t have the correct amount in your wallet that you would like to give, pull-out your smart phone, Text to Give your donation to phone number 238-388-3232, or point your camera to the QR Code on the

Sanctuary screen (or in the Order of Worship) which will take you to our giving page and follow the easy clicks there. Consider your generosity unbounded! Any time. Anywhere. From any device.

Note that we have a new Text to Give option for “MDF”, the Minister’s Discretionary Fund. You may have noticed that we have an active Minister now and her ministry here is in need of additional discretionary funds. Please contribute to the MDF and enable Rev. Sue to continue doing the good work of the Congregation.

Something to try on those hot summer days! It’s a cool Breeze!

UUCFM Finance Committee



September Sharing Partner

The Q (Quality Life Center)

They strive to create a brighter future for both individuals and communities. Through a blend of academic enrichment, performing arts, leadership development and cultural awareness, they empower young people and underserved communities to unlock their full potential and thrive in a world of possibilities.

Community Sharing Partners

Rev. Sue Gabrielson presents a check to The Alliance for Fair Food (Coalition of Immokalee Workers), our May Community Sharing Partner.



Beth Graham presents a check to Visuality, our June Community Sharing Partner.



MEMBERSHIP NEWS

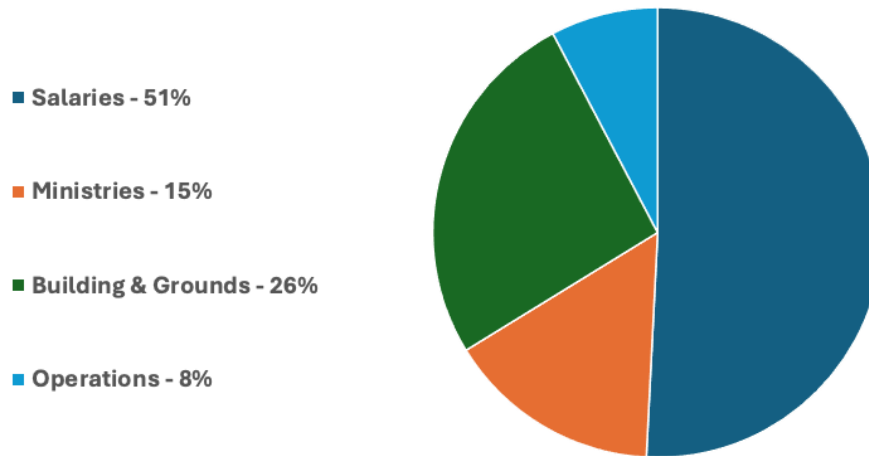


Futures News

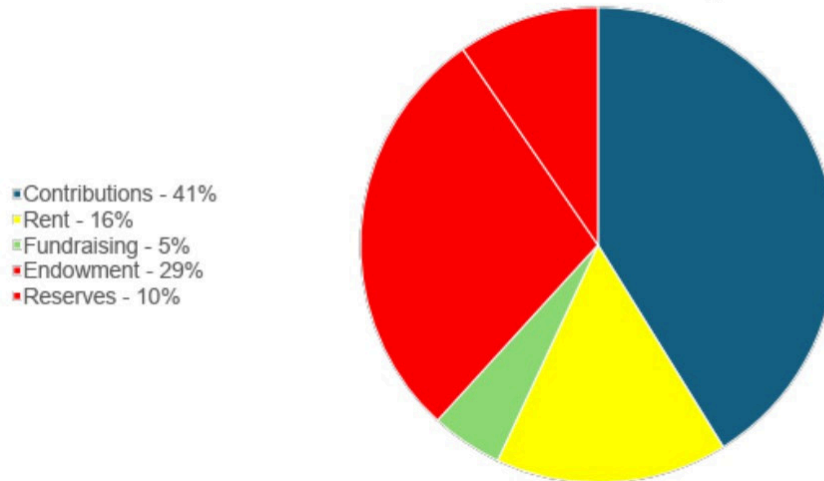
Jennifer Grant moderated the zoom Town Hall Meeting on Sunday afternoon to provide the congregation an opportunity to ask questions and to offer suggestions and ideas to the Futures committee and to the Strategic Visioning Team. Pati Maier, our congregational Treasurer, presented the following images to clarify our financial situation and the reasons that we have to take action now before we find ourselves unable to meet our financial obligations.

The first pie chart shows where our money comes from. The second shows where our money goes. The areas in red indicate resources that we will use up in a few years if we do not identify new income sources. The committee and the team recognize that using the principal of these resources poses a danger to our financial future. It is for this reason that we have engaged the help of Sacred Places.

What Do We Spend Our Money On?



Where Does Our Money Come From?



Statement of Financial Position August 9, 2024

Endowment Fund	\$413,520
Reserve Funds	\$95,771
Total	\$509,291



At the meeting, member Mary Peabody commented that to increase our income, we have three options: finding the right tenants, growing our congregation, and philanthropy. Sacred Places is helping us with the one issue of using our property to increase income in a way in harmony with our values.

Community Event

Having gone through various stages of the process laid out for us by Sacred Places, we are now ready to involve leaders in the community around us to see what we have to offer and to provide suggestions of their own. We have sent invitations to over thirty community leaders and have already received some acceptances. Here is an image provided by Bill Petrarca of some of their logos.

September 12 Community Conversation Attendees



Back to the Town Hall Meeting

The zoom meeting was attended by about 20 congregants. There was a lively discussion and at this point all options are on the table from renting what we have to selling part of it to selling all of it and moving. We can be proud that we started this process early enough that we still have an abundance of options. Futures Committee Member Patricia Vivier-Naidl pulled together the many strands of the conversations. Here are her words.

“As we look to the future and what will sustain us as a Community, we need to consider all possible options. On September 12th we will be listening to what members of the larger community of Ft Myers and beyond have to say about possible uses of our Sacred Place. Then we will have a better idea of our future direction, whether to

share, rent, build or sell parts or all of our campus. We need to consider wisely and partner with those who share our vision and values!”



Do You Know a Lawyer who Specializes in Education?

A committee of Quakers and UU's is exploring the idea of starting a Friends School on the UUCFM campus. They are at the point where they need legal advice. If you know a lawyer who could help please let us know.

margaretgonzalez@me.com

UPCOMING EVENTS & UUCFM HAPPENINGS

To view UUCFM's September calendar of events, please see the attachment to this email.

Board of Trustees Meeting

The Board Meeting will take place on Tuesday,
September 17th at 5:00 p.m. The link to attend is
<https://zoom.us/j/98592017228>

Upcoming Worship:

September's Soul Matters Theme is: *Invitation*

September 8 - The Five Invitations (Discovering What Death Can Teach Us About Living Fully). Rev Sue Gabrielson, Service Leader. Gary Robbins, Worship Associate.

September 15 - Not by Bread Alone (An Invitation to Embrace Non-Material Riches). Lesley Peterson, Service Leader. Andrea Joy, Worship Associate. ***Join us for a Potluck after service.**

September 22 -Mabon (An Invitation to Learn About CUUPS). Rev. Sue Gabrielson and CUUPS, Service Leader. Andrea Joy, Lesley Peterson, and CUUPS, Worship Associates.

September 29 - UU Climate Justice Revival. Rev. Sue Gabrielson, Service Leader. Andrea Joy, Worship Associate.

New Event!

Sometimes Saturdays Workshops with Rev. Sue

Hobart Hall

September 14th - 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. - Creating Your Own Spiritual Autobiography - How have you come to believe (or know) what you know. Find out as we reflect our individual spiritual paths. This is an in-person workshop. Please bring your own lunch.

October 12th - 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. - Putting Things in Order - Planning for the inevitable. We are all going to die, how can we help our loved ones by planning ahead (any age folks are welcome). There is a \$15.00 materials fee for this course and you must register with Sarah in the office by October 7th. Please bring your own lunch.

November 16th - 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Just for Fun
- Bring your favorite board or card games. We will play for a couple of hours and then share lunch together. Bring your own lunch.



Potluck

Please join us for Potluck on **Sunday, September 15th**, following Service. If you are able, please bring a dish to share. For more information please contact Dorothy Van Howe, dorothyvanhowe@gmail.com.

UUA x Yes on 4 Virtual Phonebank

September 5th, 2024, 6:00-7:30 p.m.

Register here: <https://mobilize.us/s/QZjUD4>

UU folks, join *Yes on 4* for our weekly virtual phone bank session where you will connect to voters via phone call to invite them to take action and support Yes on 4 this election cycle. No experience is necessary, we will provide training and support to you while you make calls from anywhere! Help us grow our movement to limit government interference with abortion!

UUCFM Social Justice Activities & Committees

Social JUJustice Book Group: Contact Cat (equalrightscommittee@UUCFM.org) for information and for links.

Poetry Group: Writing through Oppression: Alternate Tuesday afternoons (2:30-4:30) and Saturday evenings (6:30-8:30). Contact Cat (equalrightscommittee@UUCFM.org) for information and for links.

Social Justice Action Team: Please join us on the last Sunday of the month, via Zoom, at 5:00 p.m.

Freedom to Read Library: Our UUCFM library team intends to protect the availability of books about diverse populations, even as those books are being banned. We are now seeking volunteers to staff the library after services.

Letters-to-the-Editor Workshops: Next date and time to be determined. We need volunteers to write to papers across Florida and beyond, as we see the oppression of many groups being intensified every day.

Post-carding: Online (TBD) and occasionally in Hobart Hall. Send postcards (or letters/emails) about your support for or opposition to causes and/or oppressive conditions to your representatives or to those who are running against them. Ask us for help or volunteer to staff a table. (Please be aware that there are some political actions or statements that we, as a faith community, cannot say or advocate. Most of the causes must be addressed as letters from an individual, not sent in the name of our Congregation.)

Combating Fascism Group: For more information contact Cat, equalrightscommittee@UUCFM.org

Equal Rights/ Welcoming Congregation Committee: Help us become an ever more welcoming and inclusive congregation. Our work is urgent now, since Queer, Trans, and Gender Non-Conforming people are under attack by multiple groups, and as we speak out about the content of some of the dangerous strategies being employed against us and against other oppressed groups. Help us support a universe that will arc toward Justice. Contact Cat (equalrightscommittee@UUCFM.org) for information and for links.

Men's Group

Men's Group meets on the third Thursday of the month. Please join us at Cross Creek Golf Club at 11:30. Our next meeting will take place on **September 19th**. All are welcome! Good menu; low prices; great companionship. Please contact Dave Katz for more information, dkatz762@gmail.com

Weekly Music Rehearsals

*Please note there will be no Music Rehearsal on September 4 and September 18.

Music rehearsals take place every Wednesday night in Classroom 3. 5:30 p.m. for Instrumentalists and 6:00 p.m. for Singers. All are welcome. Contact Jon at music@uucfm.org. for more information.

Monday Book Group

Please join us at 1:00 p.m. on Mondays via Zoom. Contact [Mary Studer](#) for the Zoom link.

Monday Meditation Group

Please join us for Meditation Sessions on Monday evenings, on Zoom, at 6:30 p.m. For more information please contact Mary Studer, mstuder929@gmail.com.

The Buddhist Group

Rissho Kosse-Kai

Rissho Kosse-Kai of Fort Myers has been at UUCFM for over 10 years. We are a lay-led group that meets every Sunday from 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. in Room 3.

We open our service with recitation from the Lotus Sutra and then have either a study session or group sharing of lives and listening with compassion. We often close with a short meditation. Some Sundays we have a Zoom service and on others just an in person gathering.

For information on the specific activity for a given Sunday, please check our website at [Rissho Kosei-Kai of Fort Myers](#). Everyone is always welcome and we appreciate being part of this congregation. For more information please contact Mary Tracy Sigman at marytracysigman115@gmail.com.



Potluck Fun

At the August 18th Potluck, Lesley, Patricia and Marge celebrated the anniversary of the ratification of the 19th amendment, giving women the right to vote, by

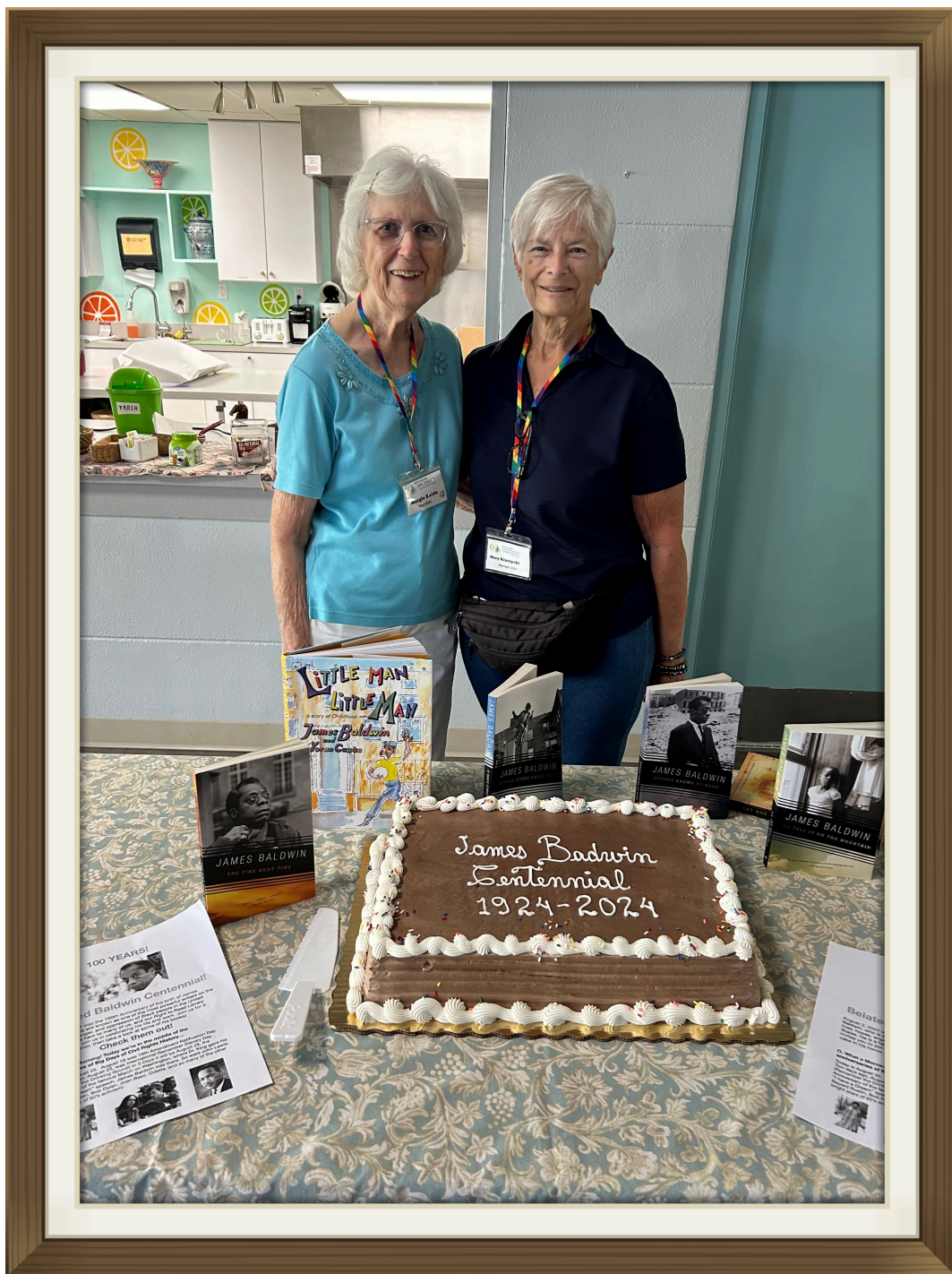
singing “VOTE: It’s a Many Splendored Thing.” Their rendition had many high points. (Some might say ‘Too many high points’—check out Andrea’s expression.) The baby decidedly channeled the suffragette spirit. The important point of the lyric is “So let’s have our say and VOTE to make the world a better place.”

Blessing of the Animals

Our Blessing of the Animals service was a wonderful time had by all.



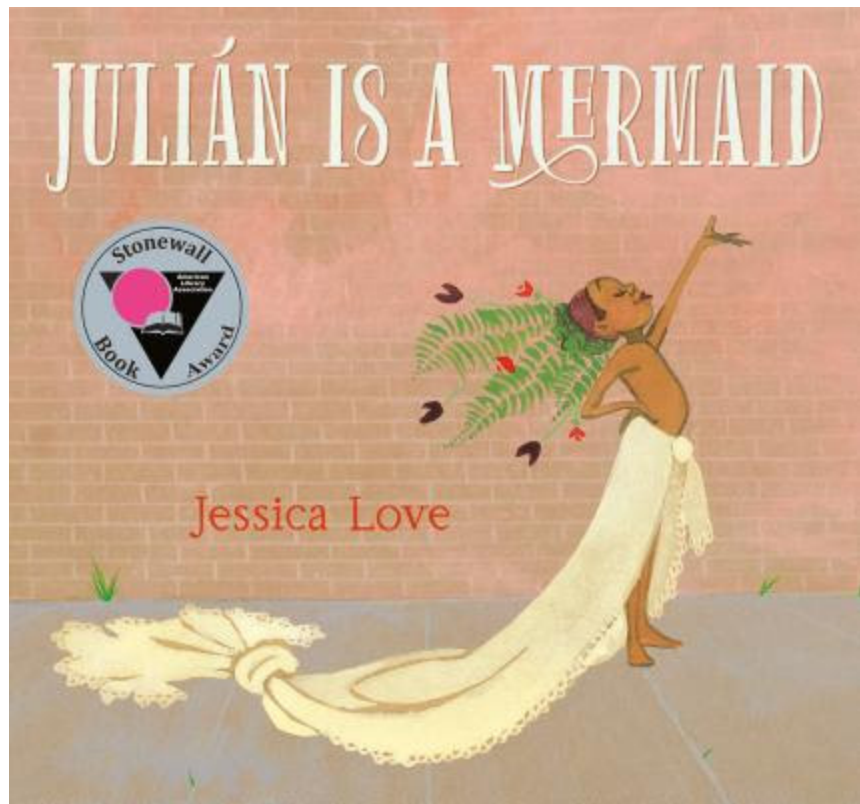




James Baldwin Celebration

Margie Kolde and Mary Kluczycki are enjoying the centennial celebration of James Baldwin. All the books by him were contributed by Cat P.

Check It Out: Freedom to Read Library!



A Hispanic American Awareness Month book review:

Julián Is a Mermaid

Julián is a Mermaid, a winner of the Stonewall Award, written and illustrated by Jessica Love, is a beautiful and powerful picture book, especially if the adult who is reading it aloud pronounces the Spanish words correctly and allows the written lines and the pictures to tell their own stories.

Julián is on the subway with Abuela when they see a group of women dressed as mermaids. "Julian loves mermaids," and tells Abuela that he is a mermaid. While Abuela is having a bath, Julian finds everything

necessary to dress as a mermaid, even red lipstick and a mermaid tail made from a curtain. When Abuela comes into the room, she says, "Oh." Then she gives Julian a necklace and walks with Julian to the Coney Island Mermaid Parade. She tells Julian, "They are mermaids...Like you, Julian." Julian joins the other mermaids.

Jessica Love tells and paints a story filled with beauty and ambiguity. Julián's probable gender identification with the women dressed as mermaids is not overtly described but left open so that children can feel their way into Julián's dress-up and imagined transformation. Love slides deftly into a blend of real enactment and magical transformation that meets 5-8 year old children where they are developmentally. Many gender-expansive as well as many young cis-gender children find comfort in identification with mermaids and metaphors of transformation. This is a book that different children can connect with in different and magical ways.

The author neither labels nor preaches. The book opens a space for gender-expansive children to be themselves rather than being confronted by questions or expectations. Abuela models love, acceptance, and support without defining the child's experience.

It may be difficult for many adults to avoid questioning or explaining when reading this story aloud. However, if they can let the story and the beautiful illustrations stand on their own, this is a book that can expand the world of both the child and the adult.



Zami: A New Spelling of My Name

a biomythography by Audre Lorde

Opening a book can be like finding buried treasure, full of surprises and laden with gems. Zami is such a book. What Audre Lorde calls “biomythography,” most of us would call a memoir. Born into a family in Harlem, Audre grew up facing the double challenges of being Black and being gay. Her family of course was well aware of racism, but they left it to their brilliant and sensitive daughter to figure out for herself what lay ahead. When she ran for class president, the nuns informed the students that they were to vote for the best student. The only Black child and by far the best student in the class, Audre was sure she would win. When she came

home heartbroken after her loss, her mother berated her and smacked her around for her stupidity. That is as much help as she got from home in dealing with racism. Being gay, was even more difficult. She left home to fend for herself at the age of seventeen.

Audre comes of age during the 50's and 60's before Roe vs. Wade, and we find out, in a cautionary tale to our own times, what a harrowing experience it was for a young girl with no access to medical services. Audre comes to

define her life by the relationships she forges, lovingly with other lesbians but also in complicated friendships with straight men and women, who cannot understand the oppression she lives with every day. "I remember how being young and Black and gay and lonely felt. . . .We. . .sweated out our first heartbreaks with no school nor office chums to share that confidence over lunch." Those of us who were around during those years will savor the soundtrack that accompanies the events – "Dance, ballerina, dance." "I found my thrill/On Blueberry Hill"

The honesty of her self-reflections, revealing both her courage and her tender vulnerabilities, will steal your heart: the gorgeous, unpretentious poetry of her sentences will sweep you through her struggles with boring and dangerous work in Stamford, her path toward strength in Mexico, and her forging of community in New York's East Village. Homophobia and racism restricted

her agency in the world and yet she found a way and, against the odds, defined herself on her own terms.



**Want to make a difference in the November elections?
Join SWFL Floridians for Democracy for a major
postcarding event at UUCFM.**

NO on Amendment 1 and YES on Amendment 4. Cards, stamps, pens, refreshments, sample messages and lots of fun will all be provided.

September 21, 2:00-4:00 p.m. Hobart Hall

Register here: info@floridiansfordemocracy.org

Exciting Speakers for FFD's September 12 Virtual Program!

Join us: 7-8:30pm ET

[Register Here](#)

SEPT 12 - FL AMENDMENTS

NO on 1 **YES on 4**

Vote NO!
Support students over politics.

Vote YES!
Support reproductive freedom.

Rosemary Nilles
League of Women Voters

Andrew Spar
Florida Education Assoc.

Natasha Sutherland
Floridians Protecting Freedom

Cecile M. Scoon
League of Women Voters of Florida

Floridians will be voting this November on state constitutional amendments which will significantly impact the lives of citizens.

Amendment 1 would make school board elections partisan. This is a bad idea:

- The focus of school boards should be students, not a political party or a political agenda.
- Educational merit, not politics should guide policies concerning teacher hiring, curriculum choices and student welfare.
- Partisan elections exclude non-traditional candidates.

Amendment 4 would restore women's reproductive decisions in concert with qualified clinicians. It deserves your support:

- Current law bans abortion before many women even realize they are pregnant, with limited exceptions for rape, incest or health risks.
- Personal healthcare decisions, including those concerning pregnancy and abortion belong with patients and their doctors, not politicians.
- Doctors should not have to choose between prison and providing a woman with good healthcare.

Phone: (239) 581-2700
Website: uujcfm.org
Email: office manager@uujcfm.org
Office hours: M-Th 9-1:30

NO on 1 **FLORIDIANS FOR DEMOCRACY** **YES on 4**

Connect with us on Facebook and Instagram



[Manage Email Preferences](#)

 **September Monthly Calendar (1).pdf**
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