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Fairhope Unitarian Fellowship
 1150 Fairhope Ave.
 Fairhope, AL 36532
 FairhopeUU.org

A NOTE FROM THE FUF PRESIDENT

To Sing, Or Not to Sing

From the inception of the Fellowship, music and arts have been an integral part of our Sunday programs. Fortunately, we have many members who are accomplished musicians and who generously share their talents. Since 1986, The Back Porch Folk Singers have been the backbone of our music program, continuing to provide opening music and collection music on the last Sunday of each month. Often, we are also invited to sing a number selected by Phil Strinste, who provides the lyrics. Phil was part of the BPFs in his younger years and, as others stepped back, assumed leadership—a role he continues today.

In recent years, Gwen Snyder has coordinated the schedule of additional performers, bringing a wide range of music—from classical to contemporary to folk, and in between.

For several years, Heather Nutting led a choir at the Fellowship. It began around 2006, when she visited one Sunday while vacationing in Gulf Shores. She had brought her violin and offered to play some time. The Fellowship had just lost their music director, which led Heather to try her hand at conducting the choir. She continued in that role for 13 years, leading the choir one Sunday each month.

Heather, playing second violin, joined the existing trio of string players—Sarah Katz (first violin), Diane Ehlers (viola), and Pinky Bass (cello)—forming a quartet. She also joined the Back Porch Folk Singers simply for the joy of making music together.

Like Heather, many others got their musical needs met by sharing their

(Continued on page 2)

instrumental talents, engaging their voices, and tapping their toes through musical groups within and beyond the Fellowship.

Since 2021, what with the recovery from COVID isolation, the explosion of “outsiders” moving to the Eastern Shore, reaction to the political situation, or personal reasons, there has been a large influx of new members to the Fellowship. Many of us have arrived with previous “church” experience or expectations of what we seek during this hour of gathering with like-minded individuals seeking solace. Some have shared that they miss the opportunity to sing in community. Others are reluctant to disrupt how the service has “always” been and reject the idea of songs sung being “too churchy.” The question becomes: how do we find a balance—honoring comfort while also meeting evolving needs?

So, to neither overwhelm nor neglect making some small changes, we want to continue our fine music program, with special musicians opening our Sunday program at 10:45 a.m. During this time, and out of courtesy to the performers, please be mindful to lower your voices in the foyer and as you enter the Hall. Our musicians work hard to prepare and perform and deserve our full attention.

Depending on the program, either the first or second Sunday of each month will include singing during Special Music and Collection with the lyrics displayed on the screen. While some tune may be familiar from more traditional settings, selections from the UU hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*, have “tweaked” the words to be, well – more Unitarian Universalist. The point is we like to sing tunes with words that are meaningful to us.

The Back Porch Folk Singers will continue their tradition of leading music on the last Sunday of each month, often inviting us to sing along during Special Music and Collection.

Whether you are brave enough to belt it out, harmonize, mumble along, or mouth the words only, singing together is one more way we build and strengthen community.

Proudly and humbly,
Mary Anderson, President



MARCH BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

At our March meeting, the Board continued focusing on caring for our building, strengthening our governance practices, and supporting programs and community life at the Fellowship.

Financially, the Fellowship ended February with a balance of \$18,702. Plans are underway to make giving easier, including the introduction of QR codes for donations in the building and on the Sunday program. The Fellowship also now has a mobile office phone (with the same phone number 251-929-3207), allowing for texting and the use of mobile-based tools such as Venmo to improve communication and operational flexibility.

Recent improvements to the main building and garden shed have been completed, including exterior caulking, stucco repair, power washing, and a new metal roof for the shed. We continue to explore driveway repairs and exterior signage. The Board also approved Directors & Officers (D&O) insurance and confirmed that we are in compliance with federal and Alabama nonprofit requirements.

Spring events include the screening of *Sallie’s Ashes* (March 18), the Stand-Up Comedy Show (March 28), and the

Rummage Sale on April 4 (with setup on April 3). The February Gifts & Gratitude program received a positive response. Leadership updates include the resignation of Gwen Snyder as Music Committee chair; Heather Nutting, Phil Storm, and Mary Anderson are currently serving in that role.

The Board approved funding for up to two delegates to attend the UUA General Assembly virtually and established a \$1,000 budget for landscaping projects. Work continues on interior signage and updates to facility use practices.

Mary Matthews has resigned as 1st Vice President, and the Board will consider a replacement. A draft records retention policy is in development for future review, and minor adjustments have been made to the Sunday service format in response to member feedback.

As always, we are grateful for the many members who step forward to serve and support the life of our Fellowship.



BUILDING & GROUNDS UPDATES

Over the past couple of months, we've seen many improvements to our building (thanks to professional work) and our grounds (thanks to the efforts of our wonderful volunteers!).

Volunteers have been hard at work refreshing our outdoor spaces—clearing overgrown areas, tidying garden beds, adding native plants and flowers, and spreading fresh mulch. The Memorial Garden (seen in the before and after to the right) has had a beautiful transformation (see before and after!).

In the process, they also rediscovered our “happy little fellow” (more on his story in next month’s newsletter!) and have given him a new home closer to the building.



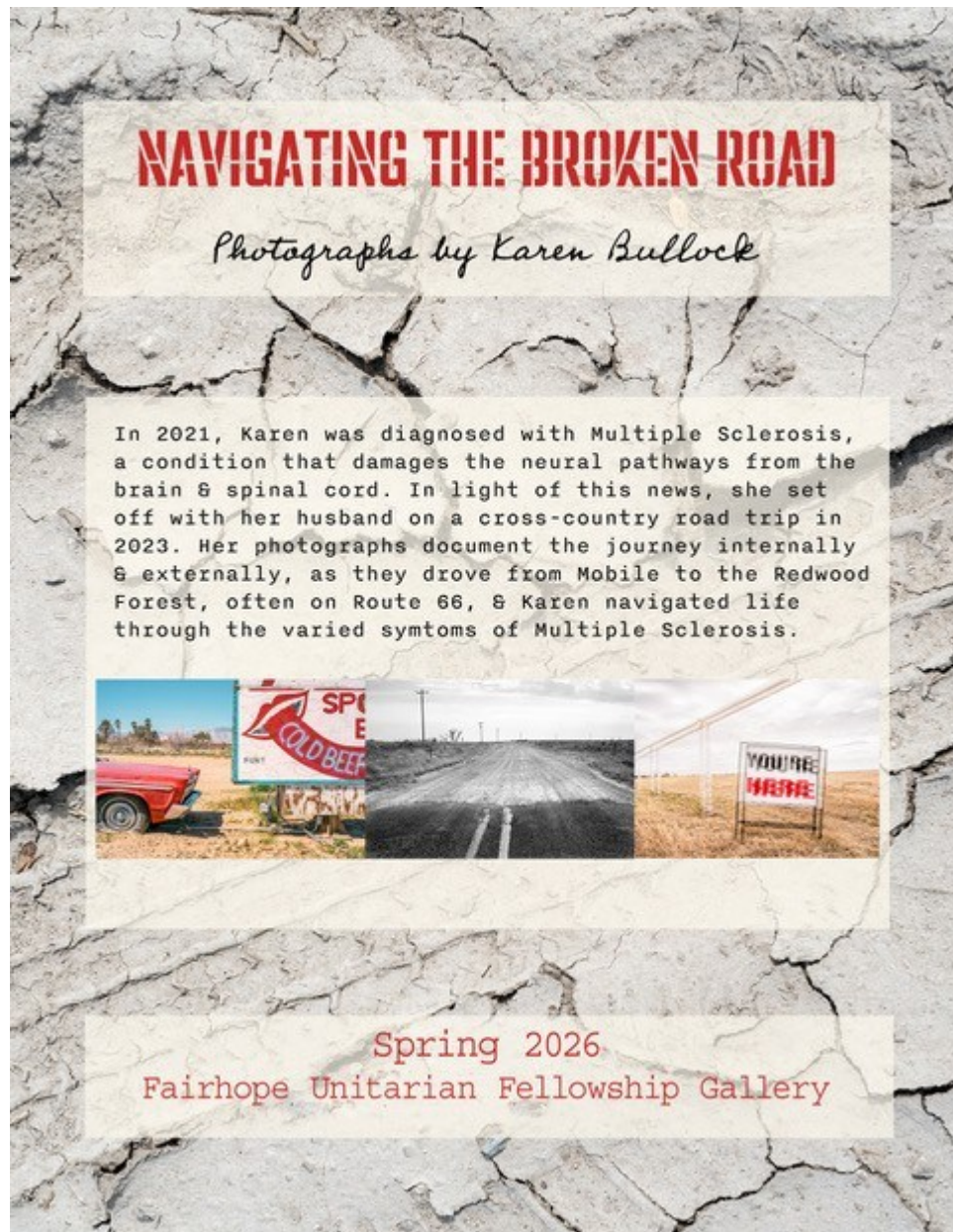
Before:
Overgrown and a bit neglected



After:
cleaned up, mulched, and refreshed!



MARCH & APRIL ART EXHIBIT



Karen is known for her documentary-style photographs of the American South, with a focus on expressions of faith, considerations of home, and the enduring spirit of nature. Primarily lens-based, her practice uses vivid color and light to explore the unheard voice via gesture, sense of place, and mood.

Featured in Lenscratch, Karen's project, *Presence Obscured*, was selected for *PhotoNola's Currents at the Ogden Museum of Southern Art*, *Atlanta Photography Group's Portfolio 2020*, and *PhotoLucida's Critical Mass Top 200*. Her series, *See Me*, was included in the *Rfotofolio's Selections*. Her work has been featured in over 30 exhibitions and various publications.

Most of her photographs are made during road trips. Sometimes Karen travels solo but since being diagnosed with [Multiple Sclerosis](#) in 2021, she prefers to go with other photographer friends when taking longer trips. In 2023, Karen and her husband took a three-month cross-country road trip in a mini camper with their two dogs. She made photographs almost every day.

In addition to photography, Karen enjoys hand-building with clay, and curating and collaborating to create group installations that foster community. For more information: <http://www.karenbphotos.com>



One of our biggest fundraisers of the year!

FUF Rummage Sale — Saturday, April 4

Last call for donations! We will set up on Friday, April 3 for Saturday's sale. FUF storage space before April 3 is limited—please contact Elaine Synder-Conn or Suzanne Tormoen before bringing large items.

Volunteers are always appreciated for the set-up, sale, and the breakdown! Let Elaine or Suzanne know if you're willing to help.

Phil Herring and Gwen Snyder are also looking for clean used pots to transplant vegetables and ornamental plants for the yard sale. If you have some you are willing to donate, please bring them to FUF as soon as possible!



INVITE TO NEW MEMBERS

If you wish to become a voting member of the Fairhope Unitarian Fellowship, you simply fill out the New Member Form available in hard copy or at fairhopeuu.org/join, and sign the Membership Book. Please see Mary Anderson (Member Support Chair) or Ashley Weller (Administrative Assistant) to learn more. New Member Orientation will be sometime in May with New Member Welcoming in early June. Watch further announcements.



CARES AND CONCERNS

If you experience a health setback and could use some assists or if you know of a Fellowship friend or member who is experiencing such setback, the Care and Concerns Team is here to help. Team members and friends can provide meals, transportation, cards of support, and/or visits while you are on the mend. Call/text Susan Hammack @ 205-527-3328 Email the Fellowship office office@fairhopeuu.org or leave a voicemail at 251-929-3207. You are not alone. We are in this together.

April Programs

Join us for Fellowship every Sunday!

9:45am—Silent Meditation 10:45am—Musical Prelude

11:00am—Program with Guest Speaker

Coffee Hour follows; Potluck on the last Sunday of the month



Easter Circle

April 5

New Beginnings

On Easter Sunday, April 5, we will have a circle to share our experiences with “new beginnings.”

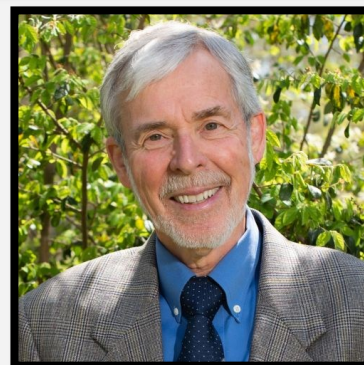
Easter is one of the highlights of the Christian traditions. Celebrating Easter in the spring denotes new awakenings of nature. The Easter Bunny is a folkloric symbol of Easter that brings eggs. Easter eggs symbolize new life, rebirth, and even resurrection, with traditions dating back to ancient fertility rites and early Christian practices. To use “resurrection” in a non-secular sense means “the revitalization or revival of something.” Most of us have at one time or another time been “revitalized” or felt “renewed.” We hope to recall and share how it happened and what it meant to us.

April 12

The Story of Love

Human love is necessary for the survival of our species. Our brains and bodies push us to find others to love and to mate with because we are “pack animals” and “primates”. Harvey will trace the biological evolutionary history of love and explain how love has driven human relationships through the rise of agriculture, civilizations, religions, and recent history. The emergence of “marriage for love” during the last century will be explored. No program about love would be complete without love songs, so the presenter and his musical colleagues will entertain the Fellowship with love songs before the service and during the presentation.

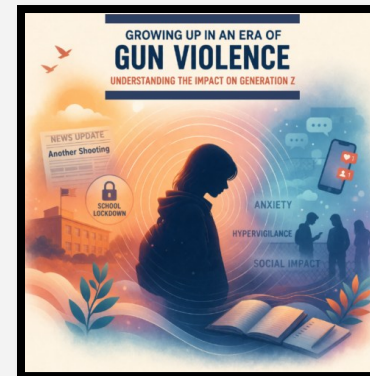
Dr. Harvey Joanning is an Emeritus Professor at Iowa State University and an Adjunct Professor of Psychology at the University of South Alabama where he is the Co-Director of the Neurobiology of Relationships Study. He is dual licensed as a psychologist and as a Marriage and Family Therapist.



Dr. Harvey Joanning

April 19

Growing Up in an Era of Gun Violence: Understanding the Impact on Generation Z



This talk reflects on how the increase in mass shootings has affected Generation Z, highlighting the mental and physical toll of ongoing stress and its influence on social connection and daily life.

Drawing from lived experience as an older Gen Z, Divia will share insights into growing up during a period marked by rising gun violence and school shootings, and how it has shaped their generation.

Divia Avrill



April 26

Overcoming Obstacles Together as a Loving Community

Debby's mission is to inspire others to soar and to recognize their ability to succeed and overcome obstacles, even in the face of life's challenges. She emphasizes that we can change the world around us by demonstrating justice, equity, and compassion through peaceful means.

Debby Hackbarth

Drawing from her own life experiences—overcoming prematurity, vision challenges, and lifelong bullying, and ultimately earning a black belt in martial arts in her seventies—she offers a powerful reminder that anything is possible with determination.

Debby holds a master's degree in Literacy and is the author of four children's books, a collection of poetry, and a memoir that received an International Impact Book Award in 2025. She has also written lyrics for *Live in Unity*, published by Music for World Peace.

Her work is also featured in anthologies by Clarendon House Publications and Four Feathers Press, as well as in various online publications including The Writers Club, Christian Magazine, World Spoken Word & Poetry, and Spillwords Press.

She has lived in lovely Fairhope since 2019 and is active in several local writing groups that include Pensters Writing Group, Alabama State Poetry Society, and the Alabama Writers Cooperative. She also serves as editor and contributing author for the *Fairhoppers Newsletter* produced by the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation.

Open to all!

FUF Groups

Weekly

Silent Meditation Group

Sundays at 9:45am.
 Contact: Nick Coulson

Uke Open Jam

Meets every Monday from 2-4pm.
 All are invited to come jam with us.
 Contact: Carl Couret

Men's Discussion Group

Join us every Tuesday at 9am
 at the Kind Café in Fairhope.
 Contact: Don Joffe

Back Porch Folk Singers

No invitation necessary
 3-4:30pm every Wednesday
 Contact: Phil Strniste

Thursday Group

Meets every Thursday 5pm
 at the Market by the Bay on Church Street.
 Contact: Michael Patrick



New Class Alert!

Ever wonder how your past religious experiences help to make you who you are today? New to UUism? What brought you to FUF? "Owning Your Religious Past" is an exploration of these questions. It's five 1½ hour sessions and we will likely meet on Tuesdays, late afternoon. And of course it wouldn't be a UU course without food! We are still open to 4 more folks joining us.

Interested? Contact Irene Wegner!

Bi-weekly

Women of Wisdom Discussion Group

WoW meets every other Thursday at 11am in the *Louisa May Alcott* Foyer. Members select the topic. Lunch to follow at a local restaurant.
 Contact Vivian McMurry or Jean Normand

Monthly

Non-Fiction Book Group

Meets at 9:30am on the 1st Thursday of the month.
 Contact: Robin Fabel or Michael Patrick

Fiction Book Group

Meets at 4:30pm monthly on the 4th Thursday
 Contact: Kathryn Firsching

Chalice Circles

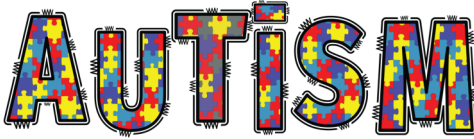

Afternoon Circle meets 1:30pm on 4/15 at the Joffe's
 Evening Circle meets 6:30pm on 4/16 at the McMurry's
 To join, an empty chair awaits you.
 April's topic is "And What Were You Told"
 Contact: Mary Anderson, Joanne Preston, Maggie Joffe, or Vivian McMurry

Sunday	Chalice Lighting	Special Reading
April 5	Rachel Gareri	Suzanne Tormoen
April 12	Dana Roberts	Dana Roberts
April 19	Mike Griffin	Irene Wegner
April 26	Mia Manifold	Nick Coulson



Interested in serving as a chalice lighter or reader?
 See Joanne Preston to sign up for future dates!



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
 <p>Acceptance Month</p>			<p>1</p> <p>3pm-4:30pm-Back Porch Folk Singers</p> <p>4:45-5:45– Eastern Shore Strings</p>	<p>2</p> <p>9:30-Non-Fiction Book Group</p> <p>11am-WoW</p> <p>3-5pm-Mike Darby Memorial</p> <p>5pm-Thursday Group (FH Market by the Bay)</p>	<p>3</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Rummage Sale Setup</i></p>	<p>4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">8am-1pm Rummage Sale</p>
<p>5</p> <p>9:45-Silent Meditation</p> <p>10:45-Prelude</p> <p>11:00-Program</p> 	<p>6</p> <p>2pm- Uke Open Jam</p>	<p>7</p> <p>9am-Men’s Group (Kind Café)</p>	<p>8</p> <p>3pm-4:30pm-Back Porch Folk Singers</p> <p>4:45-5:45– Eastern Shore Strings</p>	<p>9</p> <p>5pm-Thursday Group (FH Market by the Bay)</p>	<p>10</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1pm-ESIC</p>	<p>11</p>
<p>12</p> <p>9:45-Silent Meditation</p> <p>10:45-Musical Prelude</p> <p>11:00-Program</p> <p>12:45-4pm-Grandmothers’ Circle</p>	<p>13</p> <p>2pm- Uke Open Jam</p>	<p>14</p> <p>9am-Men’s Group (Kind Café)</p>	 <p>15</p> <p>1:30pm– Small Group at the Joffe’s</p> <p>3pm-4:30pm-Back Porch Folk Singers</p> <p>4:45-5:45– Eastern Shore Strings</p>	<p>16</p> <p>11am-Women of Wisdom</p> <p>5pm-Thursday Group (FH Market by the Bay)</p> <p>6:30pm– Small Group at the McMurry’s</p>	<p>17</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1pm-ESIC</p>	<p>18</p>
<p>19</p> <p>9:45-Silent Meditation</p> <p>10:45-Musical Prelude</p> <p>11:00-Program</p>	<p>20</p> <p>2pm- Uke Open Jam</p>	<p>21</p> <p>9am-Men’s Group (Kind Café)</p> <p>4:30pm Board Meeting</p>	<p>22</p> <p>3pm-4:30pm-Back Porch Folk Singers</p> <p>4:45-5:45– Eastern Shore Strings</p> 	<p>23</p> <p>4:30pm-Fiction Book Group</p> <p>5pm-Thursday Group (FH Market by the Bay)</p>	<p>24</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1pm-ESIC</p>	<p>25</p>
<p>26</p> <p>9:45-Silent Meditation</p> <p>10:45-Musical Prelude</p> <p>11:00-Program</p> <p>Potluck Sunday</p>	<p>27</p> <p>2pm- Uke Open Jam</p>	<p>28</p> <p>9am-Men’s Group (Kind Café)</p>	<p>29</p> <p>3pm-4:30pm-Back Porch Folk Singers</p> <p>4:45-5:45– Eastern Shore Strings</p>	<p>30</p> <p>4:30pm-Fiction Book Group</p> <p>5pm-Thursday Group (FH Market by the Bay)</p>		

Deadlines for Publications

Weekly Bulletin and FUF Weekender

Wednesdays by 5pm

Submit to Mary Matthews: matthewsmary29@yahoo.com

April Newsletter

Submit by end of day, April 22

Email your UU-relevant articles, bits of wisdom, scheduled events, quotes, poems, or images!

Submit to Ashley: Office@FairhopeUU.org



Fairhope Unitarian Fellowship

Mission Statement:

- To explore new ideas,
- To search for truth and knowledge,
- To take care of the Earth,
- To enjoy fellowship with open-minded thinkers,
- To support and care for each other,
- And to create an atmosphere of love and understanding among our members and for those who come after us.

Vision Statement:

- Grounded in love,
- guided by reason,
- committed to spiritual growth and justice.

Fairhope Unitarian Fellowship welcomes and embraces people of any age, race, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, ability, language, or cultural background.