

## Social Justice with Sheri – July 2026

**Q3 SJC -COMMITTEE MEETINGS** - Our next **Social Justice Committee Meeting** will be **Sunday, July 5, 2026**, 1245 PM (ish) in the sanctuary at UUCL. I hope to see you there. Mark your calendars for these meetings as well: August 2<sup>nd</sup> & September 6th

**Quote:** *"The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."* - Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

### **JULY'S PASSION – DEMOCRACY, THE CONSTITUTION, AND THE WORK OF FREEDOM**

**This Month's Reflection: A Unitarian Universalist Reflection as the Great American Experiment Turns 250–** by Sheri Kent [read more](#)

As the United States approaches its 250th birthday, we find ourselves standing at an important threshold. Anniversaries invite us to look backward with honesty and forward with courage. They ask us not only what we have inherited, but also what we are called to become.

The Constitution of the United States begins with three powerful words: “We the People.” Those words express a radical idea—that government derives its authority not from kings, wealth, or divine right, but from the people themselves. Democracy is an act of faith: faith that ordinary people can govern themselves, that diverse voices matter, and that liberty and justice are worthy of our collective effort.

As Unitarian Universalists, we approach democracy not merely as a political system, but as a moral and spiritual practice. Our faith affirms the inherent worth and dignity of every person, the importance of justice, equity, and compassion, and the right of conscience and the democratic process. Democracy reflects our belief that every voice has value and that communities are strongest when all people are invited to participate.

There is much to celebrate as our nation reaches this milestone.

Over these 250 years, the promise of “We the People” has steadily expanded. Slavery was abolished. Women gained the right to vote. Civil rights movements challenged segregation and discrimination. Marriage equality became the law of the land. People with disabilities won greater access and protections. Religious freedom has flourished, allowing people of many faiths—and no faith—to live and worship according to conscience. The United States has demonstrated that democratic institutions can endure through wars, economic upheavals, social movements, and moments of profound disagreement. Peaceful transfers of power, freedom of speech, an independent press, and the right to organize and protest remain extraordinary accomplishments that should never be taken for granted.

Yet Unitarian Universalism also calls us to tell the *whole truth*.

The Constitution was written at a time when many people were excluded from its protections and promises. Enslaved people, Indigenous peoples, women, and those without property were largely denied participation in the democratic process. The work of democracy has always involved expanding the circle of belonging.

Even today, significant challenges remain. Economic inequality leaves many struggling to meet basic needs. Racial injustice continues to shape opportunities and outcomes.

LGBTQ+ individuals, immigrants, and marginalized communities often face discrimination and hostility. Voting access remains contested in some places. Political polarization can make neighbors view one another as enemies rather than fellow citizens. Climate change presents another challenge that the framers of the Constitution could never have imagined, yet it raises timeless questions about our obligations to one another and to future generations.

As Unitarian Universalists, we understand that democracy is never finished. It is not a monument we preserve; it is a covenant we renew. Our faith teaches us that revelation is ongoing, that truth unfolds, and that communities grow when they are willing to listen, learn, and change.

The newly adopted UU values speak of Justice, Equity, Transformation, Pluralism, Interdependence, and Generosity, all centered in Love. These values offer guidance for our democratic life:

- Justice calls us to address inequities and protect human rights.
- Equity reminds us that equal opportunity often requires removing barriers.
- Transformation invites us to believe that both individuals and societies can change.
- Pluralism celebrates our differences as sources of strength rather than division.
- Interdependence teaches that our well-being is connected to one another and to the Earth.
- Generosity encourages compassion, service, and civic responsibility.
- And at the center is **Love**, which asks us to see one another not as opponents to defeat, but as fellow human beings deserving of dignity.

As America enters its third century, perhaps the question is not whether our democracy is perfect—it never has been. The question is whether we are willing to continue the work of perfecting it. The Constitution gave us a framework. Generations before us expanded its promise. The responsibility now belongs to us.

May we celebrate our nation's achievements with gratitude, acknowledge its shortcomings with honesty, and approach the future with hope. May we strengthen the institutions of democracy, protect the rights of all people, and widen the circle of belonging.

And may we remember that democracy, like faith itself, is an act of covenant: a promise we make to one another that every voice matters, every person has worth, and the work of justice is never complete.

**SHARE THE PLATE** – [May's share-the-plate was for ...our UUCL Ministerial Discretionary Fund.](#) We raised \$132.00.

[June's share-the-plate](#) will be for – Rose Dynasty on Sunday, June 28<sup>th</sup>.

Bring your ideas for future recipients to the SJC Meetings or email your SJC Chairperson (me.)  
*Think local.*

**NOTICE:** After much reflection, I have decided to step down as Chair of the Social Justice Committee at the end of 2026. Serving in this role has been a true honor, and I hope someone with a passion for justice and our UU values will consider stepping

forward to lead this important work and group of warriors beginning in January 2027. I will be happy to support the new chair during the transition. I invite anyone who feels called to consider serving as our next chair. Please let Sheri or Heather know if you are interested.

*Be the reason someone smiles today!*

## **This week's classifieds** (also, check the community bulletin board):

**Do you have a service or side hustle that you would like to offer UUCL congregants for a \$ fee?** One way your UUCL SJ Committee has come up with to assist each other economically, is to share this type of information in a "classified" section in the weekly newsletter and on the community bulletin board. **Please contact Sheri if you have something to add to the weekly classifieds.**

### **SERVICES OFFERED:**

**Handyman services** – If you are looking for a handyman to help with minor jobs around your home and don't want to pay outrageous prices, call or text **Daniel Whitt** at **863.844.2739**, or email [dwhitt83@gmail.com](mailto:dwhitt83@gmail.com).

**Made-to-Order Fresh Sourdough - Support Catherine Steele's small business endeavor and order yourself some delicious sourdough, text 407.329.4433 to order or go to [SourSistersBread.com](http://SourSistersBread.com).**

***THERE IS A PLASTIC BIN*** by the UUCL front door under the greeting table where you can bring items to donate to those in need. Dorothy & Ken regularly take these items to Munn Park and share them.

***THERE IS ANOTHER BIN*** at UUCL for food donations for the food insecure in our congregation and community. It is located in the hallway. Items requested are: masa, beans, rice, oil, tomato sauce, potatoes, spaghetti or shells for soups, canned vegetables, peanut butter, dry cereals with low sugar, and crackers. Make the Publix BOGOs count!

**Is being homeless and poor a crime?** The City of Lakeland is in talks about further ***criminalizing homelessness and poverty*** as well as **cracking down on the organizations who step in to help their neighbors**. If you support this work, please send a letter to the Lakeland City Commission and the Mayor telling them that you do not want further criminalization of homelessness and you do not want laws passed preventing churches, organizations, or private citizens from helping their neighbors and community. Here is a link to start writing your letter

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<https://actionnetwork.org/letters/oppose-anti-homeless-measures-in-lakeland>

### **IMMIGRATION RESOURCES:**

Link to "Red Cards/Tarejetas Rojas" from the ACLU – in 39 different languages. Help our friends and neighbors by sharing with them so they know their rights! All people in the United

States, regardless of immigration status, have certain rights and protections under the US Constitution. These red cards give examples of how people can exercise these rights:

<https://www.ilrc.org/red-cards-tarjetas-rojas>

#### **Local business showcase:**

##### **Rose Dynasty**

Rose Dynasty hosts family & youth events, youth mentorship programs, community resource & events, support groups, mental health help, charity fundraising, health services by Pineapple Healthcare, safe spaces and MORE.

<https://www.rosedynastyfoundationinc.org/events/>

**Kitty Cat Café and Adoption Lounge** – located at 946 E. Orange St. in Lakeland is a local business that helps cats through Savings Paws Rescue, they are an LGBTQ+ friendly and environmentally responsible business.

<https://kittycatlounge.com/about-me/>

#### **Helpful links:**

<https://www.readlakeland.com/>

<https://polkpridefl.org/>

<https://www.indivisiblepolk.com>

<https://www.facebook.com/IndivisiblePolk>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/indivisiblepolk>

<https://www.blessedbyliberty.org>

<https://www.uuclimatejustice.org/>

<https://kittycatlounge.com/about-me/>

<https://chsfl.org/>

<https://www.heartlandforchildren.org/>

<https://uuthevote.org/>

<https://www.uuclimatejustice.org/>

<https://www.uua.org/justice>

<https://www.uusc.org/about-uusc/>

<https://www.rosedynastyfoundationinc.org/events/>

<https://www.lakelandbranchnaacp.org/>

<https://www.aclufl.org/>

<https://www.lwv.org/>

<https://talbothouse.org/community-partners/>

<https://www.justia.com/lawyers/immigration-law/florida/lakeland/legal-aid-and-pro-bono-services>

<https://cflcc.org/legal-services/>

[www.frls.org](http://www.frls.org)

[www.pineapplehealthcare.com](http://www.pineapplehealthcare.com)

[www.nationallgbtmediaassociation.com](http://www.nationallgbtmediaassociation.com)

[www.atalacounseling.com](http://www.atalacounseling.com)

[www.tessierlawfirm.com](http://www.tessierlawfirm.com)

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