



Connecting In Spirit

Youth Faith Formation

Monthly News

January 2024

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Liberating Love

Our theme this month is Liberating Love. As I sat down to write this, I must admit that I struggled a bit. I was not raised to see love as something that freed or liberated, especially since I identify as a woman. I was brought up to see love as a leash, a way to control me, a burden. All types of love were paid for in sacrifice. I had never experienced anything differently, and by my early twenties, I was traveling

down the same path that the women in my family had carved for generations. I believed that love was something you must earn. I would only be worthy of love if I suffered and toiled for that love.

I'd like to say that I saw the errors of my ways on my own, but it's simply not true. Due to circumstances beyond my control, I was thrust into an environment I had never dreamed of. I was suddenly surrounded with new possibilities and new ideas and new people--people who saw my inherent worth more than I ever had. They helped change me, helped me to understand that love was a gift--a joy, and that I was more than worthy of it. I began walking my own path, finding my own way. Every time I think that I've finally got this lesson learned, something happens that makes me learn another layer about Love. Finding my best friend was one, finding my partner was another. Finding this church was yet another. This congregation is constantly illustrating how love is safe, how love can help, how love can overcome our differences, and how love will ultimately save us. I hope you'll find a way to experience that love with us this month.

Whitney

Whitney Cole (she/her/hers)

Multigenerational Director

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January Worship Series

Liberating Love



January 7: ***Plumbing the Depths of Spirit***

Rev. Lisa Romantum Schwartz

Happy New Year! Faith Formation classes for all ages resume.

January 14: ***Ministry in the Margins***

Guest Minister Rev. Chris Battle,
Battlefield Farms, Knoxville

January 21: ***How to Hypnotize a Chicken***

Rev. Lisa Romantum Schwartz

January 28: ***If You See a Good Fight,
Get In It***

Rev. Lisa Romantum Schwartz

**Join us for Sunday Worship at 10 a.m.
in person and on Zoom**

*Youth and Adult Faith Formation classes meet from
11:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. every Sunday.
Nursery is available during the FF hour.*

ORUUC WEATHER CLOSURE POLICY

WEEKDAYS: IF OAK RIDGE SCHOOLS ARE CLOSED, THE CHURCH OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED.

SUNDAYS: A DECISION WILL BE MADE BY 9 A.M. WHETHER TO HAVE IN-PERSON WORSHIP. PLEASE CHECK YOUR EMAIL AND THE ORUUC FACEBOOK GROUP FOR UPDATES.

WEEKNIGHT AND SATURDAY EVENTS: A DECISION WILL BE MADE ONE HOUR PRIOR. CHECK EMAIL AND FACEBOOK.



Leadership InFormation Seminar

**Sunday, Jan. 21
12:15–2:15 p.m.
Lunch provided**

Led by Rev. Lisa Romantum Schwartz and ORUUC Leaders. Hosted by the Nominating Committee.

Register by January 18!



Are you interested in church leadership, but feel unsure about how to get started? Looking to brush up on your skills? Maybe you want to get more involved in leadership, but not right now. Or you're an "old pro" looking to help train a new generation of leaders so you can take a break.

The Nominating Committee invites you to an informational workshop on January 21, 2024, from 12:15 to 2:15 p.m. in the Social Hall. We aim to provide valuable insights into leadership development and equip people with the skills and knowledge necessary to contribute actively to the growth and well-being of our church community. Information about the church and the skill sets needed for various positions will be discussed. We're taking a long-term view of leadership development, so please attend even if this year is not your year to serve. Interim minister Rev. Lisa will help facilitate, along with some of ORUUC's greatest leaders.

Whether you're currently in a leadership role, or aspiring to take a more active role in the future of our church community, this session is designed to inspire and guide you on your leadership journey, or help you help future leaders learn how to fill your shoes.

We are looking for all skills and abilities! **Lunch will be provided. Please register [HERE](#) before Thursday, Jan. 18 to reserve a meal.** Let's make 2024 the year of leadership growth and community connection at ORUUC!

Nominating Committee 2023-24

Nancy Highfill
Steven Barker
Sue Lasky
Amanda Branche
Cara Jordan



**5th/6th Grade OWL Classes Begin
January 7!**

Sessions will take place from 4 to 5:30 p.m. each Sunday for 10 weeks in Room 126. The cost of the class is \$50 for members and \$75 for non-members; please make your payment to ORUUC if you have not already done so. Financial assistance is available. *Parent orientation has taken place, and registration has closed for this class.*

Class Topics

1/7 Sexuality and Values

1/14 Images in Popular Culture

1/21 Body Images

1/28 Changes in Puberty

2/4 Gender

2/11 Feelings and Attraction

2/18 Reproduction and Staying Healthy

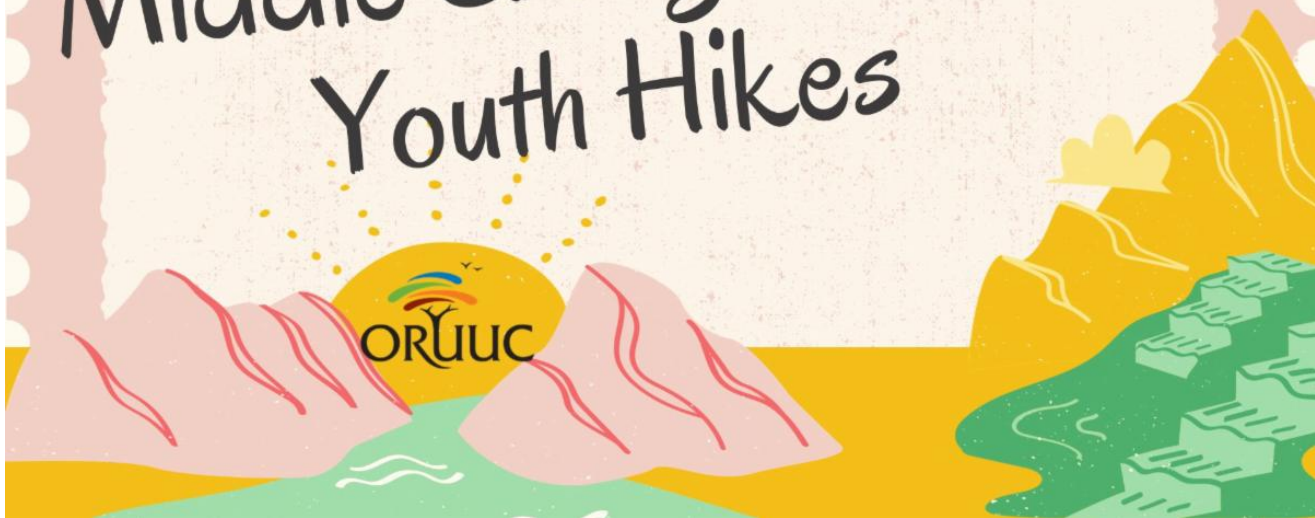
2/25 Decisions and Actions

3/3 Consent and Peer Pressure

3/10 Healthy Relationships/Family Celebration

Questions or concerns? Contact Whitney Cole, Multigenerational Director at ORUUC, at (865) 394-0626 or whit.cole79@gmail.com.

Middle & High School Youth Hikes



Monthly Hikes For Middle and High School Youth This Winter at ORUUC!

Middle and high school youth are invited to hike together each month. **The January hike is tentatively scheduled for Sunday, Jan. 14 on the Delaware Loop of the North Ridge Trail.** Keep an eye on the **ORUUC Facebook Group** and weekly emails for details. **Parents: Please make sure that you fill out and turn in a release form before the hike. Forms will be available at drop off.** Parents are welcome to join the hike! Thanks to Jim Nutaro, Aubrey Wick Sebastian, Jimmy Groton, and Whitney Cole for organizing these monthly hikes!

Gratitude Corner



Thanks to all who adopted children from this year's ORUUC Angel Tree and donated mittens, hats, and socks to the Mitten Tree to benefit the Blossom Center! We hope you know how much your gifts are appreciated!



Thanks to the Cole family for showing up and spreading cheer during last Saturday's Oak Ridge Christmas parade! The rain held off for one of the biggest parades in Oak Ridge history—there were 140 entries! Start brainstorming ideas for next year--we'd love to have a larger group representing the church and having fun at this annual community event!



PFLAG to Discuss Those Who Identify as Non-Binary Monday, Jan. 8 6:45 p.m. at Chapel on the Hill

Laura Zepeda will tackle defining nonbinary, and understanding how it relates to individuals who identify as nonbinary, from their own personal experience at the PFLAG meeting on January 8.

The United Church, Chapel-on-the-Hill, will host the meeting in the Activities Room, 85 Kentucky Ave., in Oak Ridge.

All are welcome. The group gathers beginning at 6:45 p.m. for a short social time followed by the presentation starting at 7:00 p.m. The group adjourns at 8 p.m.

Laura, an artist, comedian, and a mental health professional with the Children's Crisis Stabilization Unit in Knoxville, will bring humor as a segue into the topic. They will also explain how to understand, be affirming and comfortable using the preferred pronouns. There will be time for questions.

Oak Ridge has an active PFLAG group which meets monthly, rotating the venue among faith communities including the First Presbyterian, First United Methodist, and Oak Ridge Unitarian Universalist churches, United Church Chapel on the Hill, and the Jewish Congregation of Oak Ridge. PFLAG (formerly known as an acronym for Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) is the United States' largest organization uniting families and allies with people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ). Its mission is to provide opportunities for dialogue about sexual orientation, gender identities, and to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity. For additional information, contact PFLAG President Anne Backus at backusanne@comcast.net.



Join us with your baby, toddler and/or preschooler for bouncing, tickling, touching, clapping and action rhymes, musical circle games, simple songs, and play.

Looking for an interactive program designed to stimulate learning, introduce group activities, and encourage play? Mother Goose is the answer! Led by ORUUC's own Michael

Raymond, the Mother Goose Program is a group experience for parents and their babies and young children. The program introduces adults and children to the pleasure and power of using rhymes, songs, and stories together.

Mother Goose meets January 4 and 18 this month --the First and Third Thursdays-- at 10:30 a.m. in the Oak Ridge Public Library Auditorium. It's free and open to the community.

View and sign up for the Oak Ridge Public Library's newsletter here:
<https://mailchi.mp/oakridgetn/orpljan24>.

Youth Faith Formation Save the Dates

January 7 - 5th/6th OWL Begins

February 11 - Hugs and Quiches

February 23-25 - Spring Elementary CON

March 1-3 - Spring Intermediate CON

March 1-2 - Rummage Sale

March 9-25 - OR Spring Break (Special Programming)

March 15-17 - Senior High Mountain CON

March 31 - Easter Egg Hunt

April TBD - Ministerial Visits

April TCAP Test Break - TBD

May 12 - Last Day of Youth Faith Formation

May 19 - Bridging/Reception

June 24-28 -Rainbow Camp



Save the Date
**Spring
Rummage Sale
March 1-2, 2024**



The Spring Rummage sale is coming up fast! Rummage Week begins Saturday, Feb. 24. Many volunteers are needed to help with various tasks throughout the week and during the sale.

Youth who volunteer their time get hourly credit that's applied toward their Youth Trip Fund. And you get first dibs on lots of cool stuff! For more information, including a list of items to donate, visit <https://www.oruuc.org/rummage>. Start cleaning out those closets!

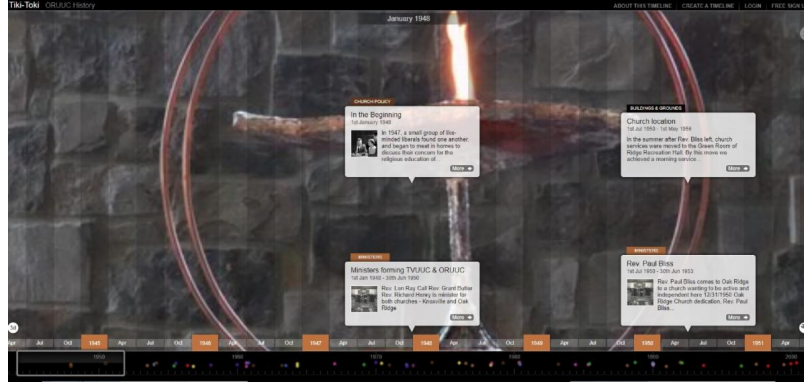


Save your plastic lids and drop them off in the bin the church lobby! Local friends of Aimee Dixon are hosting a drive to collect enough plastic lids to create three memorial benches at Linden Elementary in honor of Aimee, who was a teacher at the school. Lids may also be dropped off at Calamity's Coffee in Jackson Square. According to the organizers, any plastic lids are welcome—volunteers will sort them. Thank you!



Need Childcare for a Church Meeting or Event?

If you or your group need childcare for a church meeting or event, please complete this form **TWO WEEKS** in advance: [ORUUC Childcare Request Form \(jotform.com\)](https://jotform.com) Childcare is provided for children ages 10 and under only. Once you click "Submit," the form will go directly to ORUUC's Multigenerational Coordinator Whitney Cole, who will work with Childcare Coordinator Laura Scott to arrange childcare for your church function. Thank you!

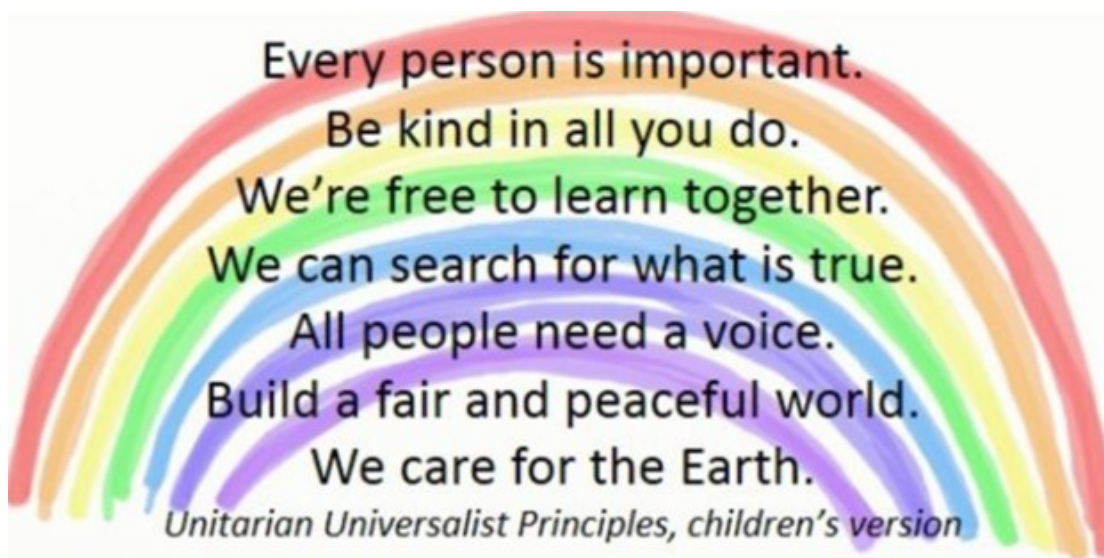


Check out the ORUUC History Timeline created by Anne Child! **ORUUC History (tiki-toki.com)**

Anne spent countless hours compiling the data shared during the January Timeline event and going through past church history publications. This fantastic interactive timeline includes photos and descriptions of life at ORUUC through the decades. Thank you, Anne!

Rev. Lisa Romantum Schwartz, Interim Minister

Rev. Lisa can be reached by email at Rev.Lisa@oruuc.org or by phone at 865-483-6761 ext. 102.



*Connecting in Spirit: Youth Faith Formation Monthly News is a digital publication designed to serve ORUUC families with children from birth through high school. **If you have ideas or suggestions for content, or would like to add someone to the mailing list, please email Rachel at communications@oruuc.org or Christine at crehder@oruuc.org. To take a look***

at past issues of *Connecting in Spirit*, visit <http://www.oruuc.org/connectinginspirit>.

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