

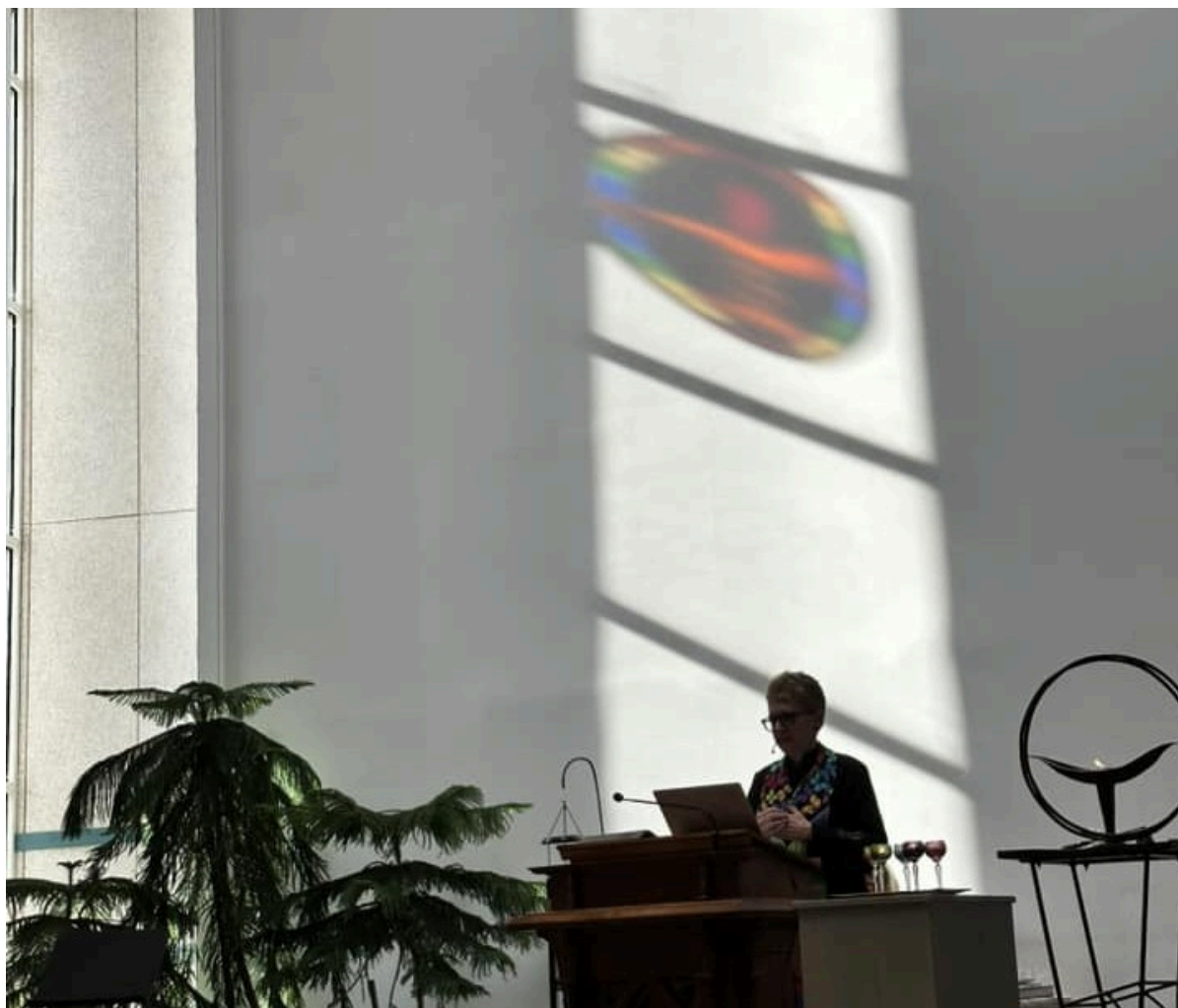
# CrossCurrents

✦ CREATING COMMUNITY BY KEEPING YOU INFORMED ✦

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH AT WASHINGTON CROSSING

## DECEMBER 2025

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*Have you noticed the colorful chalice reflected on the wall at the front of the church on sunny days during Sunday services? There's a story behind it. Read the article below by Patricia Czerwonka to learn its history.*

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## A Time of Transition

*By Michelle Zechner, UUCWC Board of Trustees*

Fall is a time of transition, when leaves slowly drift to the ground, evenings grow earlier, and the weather turns colder. It is also the season to prepare for new growth of spring and summer flowers. Here at UUCWC, we are in a similar transition period.

Our long-term Director of Congregational Life, Robin Pugh, will retire in January after years of service at the church. We celebrate Robin and her many contributions to the church and wonder what the future will look like without her. At the same time, we are preparing to say goodbye to our beloved Rev. Lisa Schilansky, who, after serving us first as ministerial intern and currently as Assistant Minister of Justice and Pastoral Care, is leaving to open a new chapter in her life. Many of us feel uncertain and maybe even a little scared about these upcoming changes and goodbyes, which is a normal response to change.

The Board at UUCWC is working diligently to evaluate all options to support the church during these transitions and to ensure the future health of our community. We established a Sustainability Task Force to assess the financial feasibility of hiring a new Assistant Minister. After these discussions, the Board and Reverend Kim are proceeding with seeking an Assistant Minister through the UUA's ministerial search process. Updates, including details on the Task Force's recommendations and the search process, will be shared more broadly in January and February.

Changes are a natural part of life, and in fact, change offers opportunities to grow and define who we are and who we want to become. During this transition, we can lean on our community's strengths with kindness, courage, curiosity, and love at the core. Our resilience stems from embracing our past with Robin and Rev. Lisa, knowing they have laid the groundwork for our community's success. Our future will be stronger because of the gifts they have given and their presence, and we will discover new ways to connect, learn, and advocate thanks to their valuable contributions. We can honor these by trusting that, together, we will grow and thrive in the years ahead.

As the poet and mystic Rumi said, “Life’s picture is constantly undergoing change. The spirit beholds a new world every moment.”

May we stay open to and embrace all of the new moments ahead.

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## Spotlight on Facilities

*By Pam Shadzik, Congregational Engagement*

Ever wondered how our grounds in Titusville stay so beautiful? Or who keeps the interior spaces so inviting? The answer to both questions is our Facilities Committee. This group oversees the upkeep of UUCWC’s building and grounds, including regular maintenance, repairs, inspections, and long-term planning to ensure our spaces support the congregation's mission and ministries.

### Why Participate in Facilities?

Maintaining our spiritual home is deeply important to our community. This hands-on work is powerful and grounding. There are so many opportunities to contribute to this work, whether just for a few hours or for longer-term projects. Working next to each other offers a great way to get to know other members of the congregation.

### How Can You Participate?

We hold regular cleanup days, typically once or twice a year, where you can volunteer for a variety of tasks. This might include tree trimming, weeding, maintaining the meditation trail, classroom painting, mulching leaves for the garden, weed-whacking, or taking on special projects that arise as we work with contractors. Our cleanup days are held in partnership with the Earth & Climate Ministry. Alternatively, you might focus on a specific area (such as the meditation trail) and maintain it throughout the year.

## More About Facilities

The core committee meets regularly. This group has the opportunity to gain a deep understanding of our building and grounds and to develop strong relationships with our staff. We also often need “worker bees” who will jump in on short-term projects. No special handyman or gardening skills are required to participate! We welcome all. The group is constantly learning about better ways to maintain our beautiful building and grounds.

Contact the co-chairs, Denny Rodgers and Justin Roth, at [facilities@uucwc.org](mailto:facilities@uucwc.org) for more information.



## A Tale of Two Chalices

*By Patricia Czerwonka*

This is the tale of two chalices, one a static representation of our symbolism and the other a fluid dance across the wall of our sanctuary. One was a failure, the other a triumph. Both reflect the love we share for our community.

Did you know that the shadow (or rainbow) of the chalice across the sanctuary wall has changed? It has, and it did right before the pandemic. UUCWC became my sanctuary when Rev. Kim first joined our church. The words of inspiration, the inclusion of all people, and the affirmation of being one with the Earth made me feel like I found my home and my people.

The moment I first set foot in UUCWC, Roy Vogel charmed me with his warm, welcoming presence. I love his banter, his dedication, and the way he shares his artistry with the congregation. Roy is the kind of man with whom you can form a genuine connection. His creativity and love for the church is inspiring and captivating.

One day, during coffee hour, Roy asked me to come up to the sanctuary. He pointed out the chalice going across the wall and asked me if it would be more beautiful in stained glass. Over the next few months, Roy and I brainstormed ways to create a stained-glass window. His vision was to catch the sunlight and project it along the sanctuary wall.

After he explained his idea, I wondered if I was in over my head. But Roy believed I had the talent and conviction to help him fulfill his dream. Over the next few months, Roy and I worked together on the piece's size, shape, and colors. Then, I set out to bring his vision to life.

It took me several months to finish the piece. When it was complete, we hung it in the sanctuary, but it didn't quite look right. The sun didn't reflect the colors or shapes we expected. Roy tried painting the background black. We hung it in a window, but it still didn't work. I then asked myself, "What does our church stand for?"

I set aside the original piece and wondered how to honor Roy's original work. I chose glass that would block all the light around the chalice. I selected colors and glass that would showcase our welcoming community. The final piece was a rainbow of colors, symbolizing our acceptance of all people in our community. It took four of us and a very tall ladder to hang, adjust, and position it so it could cascade colors across the wall.

Every time I see the reflection on the wall, whether in our video broadcasts or in person, I feel a sense of joy. I am honored to have been part of the beauty it has brought to our community. And I am humbled that Roy included me on this journey.

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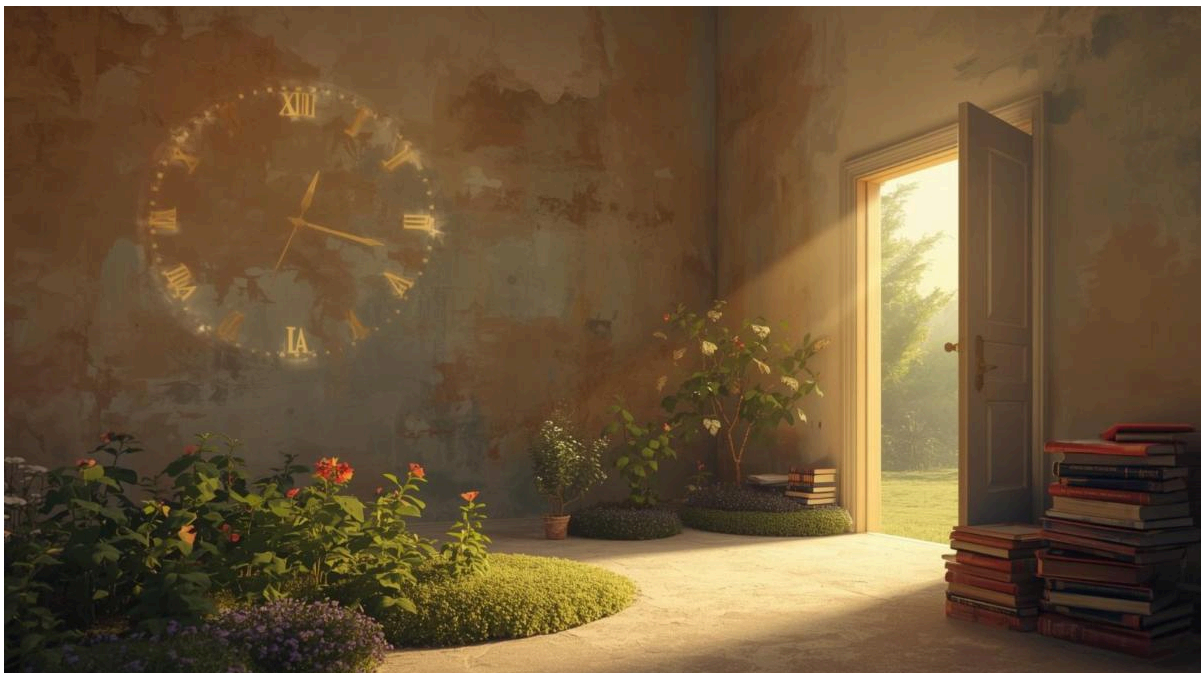
farm tours, and partner with organizations such as Isles, Rutgers, and Rolling Harvest.

3. **Community Resilience & Disaster Preparedness** – Identify local disaster-response partners and develop doable church activities such as food, clothing, or blanket drives.
4. **Nature Access for Vulnerable Populations** – Expand nature-based activities for HomeFront and urban youth, including park visits and Trenton trail clean-ups. Partner with Bowman’s Hill Wildflower Preserve.
5. **Trees, Open Space & Native Plants** – Support tree planting, wildlife habitat, and native plant use, particularly in urban areas.
6. **Energy Efficiency & Clean Energy** – Advocate for energy incentives and help connect homeowners and nonprofits with energy-coaching resources.

## Next Steps

The Earth & Climate Ministry will continue discussions with the Council for Faith in Action, the Racial Justice Ministry, the Food Ministry, the Community Outreach Fund, and community partners. These efforts will also be included in UUCWC’s upcoming application for UUA Green Sanctuary 2030 recognition.

Congregational input is encouraged, particularly on the actions the church can excel at, our short- and long-term priorities, potential partners, and urgent community needs. To share feedback or get more information, contact [earthministry@uucwc.org](mailto:earthministry@uucwc.org).



## ‘Tis the Season: Giving the Gift of Your Time

*By Mary Lou Dahms, Racial Justice Ministry*

As our thoughts turn toward family and holiday gatherings, it’s also a good time to think of those beyond the warm embrace of our families and the glow of our lit chalice and bring them within that warmth and light. The Racial Justice Ministry is part of the Council for Faith in Action and supports members and friends in

becoming active advocates for bringing about racial justice. The journey towards racial justice is a long haul. It has not become any easier in recent years, not only for people who suffer injustice, but also for allies in their support work.

Here are some opportunities you may want to consider. They are highlighted on the [UUCWC website](#) under Justice > Council for Faith in Action > Racial Justice Ministry > Action/Advocacy. These are some of the opportunities highlighted there.

- Through *Urban Promise*, you can work with children from Grades K-12 as a tutor or classroom aide, or even work on outdoor day trips or boat-building projects.
- You can volunteer to help serve and prepare meals at the *Trenton Area Soup Kitchen*, a long-time UUCWC partner, or prepare and donate meal bags or hygiene kits.
- Through *Isles*, you can work in or support a community garden or offer pro bono services in your area of expertise.
- You can volunteer with *Welcoming the Stranger* to provide free English, citizenship, and computer classes to immigrants and refugees in nearby counties in both PA and NJ.
- You can help sort and pack food through the *Bucks County Opportunity Council (BCOC)* or volunteer with the *Interfaith Food Alliance*. BCOC also offers food delivery services.
- You can volunteer at *Anchor House* to work with at-risk youth who have suffered abuse, neglect, or homelessness, or participate in the Annual 500-mile Foundation Ride for Runaways, from July 11-18, 2026.

If you want to connect with other church members and friends who have volunteered with or worked at some of these organizations, email the Racial Justice Ministry at [racialjustice@uucwc.org](mailto:racialjustice@uucwc.org), and we will put you in touch. During this holiday season, commit to this kind of gift-giving, the gift of your time and energy. There's no better time than now to give the gift of your time.



## Travel Together, Support Together: UUCWC's Airport & Train Transport Service

By Joe Schenck, UUCWC Airport & Train Transport Service

The UUCWC Airport & Train Transport Service is a convenient way to support the congregation while enjoying the many benefits of traveling “UU Style!”

Consider joining our small group of volunteer drivers who offer pick-up and transportation services to and from Philadelphia and Newark Airports, as well as local train stations.

We request that the contribution be made to UUCWC, and a stipend for expenses be given to the driver.

I have participated in this service as both a driver and a passenger. The rides offer a pleasant way to spend time with fellow UU Congregants while supporting the church and meeting a logistical travel need. Whether I am driving or riding, it is an easy and rewarding way to support the congregation. The hour spent talking during the ride to or from the airport has given me a chance to get to know several fellow congregants better while helping them and the church.

### **How It Works**

Caryl Tipton, our Director of Music Ministry Emeritus, is the director of the service, having revived it from a prior, pre-pandemic incarnation. Contact her at [transportation@uucwc.org](mailto:transportation@uucwc.org) or (609) 947-8288 to request a ride or to offer your services as a driver. We'd love to have you join us.

Compared with local airport van/shuttle prices of \$ 130-\$160 each way (using the church address), we recommend the following, which includes a donation to the church and a small tip for the driver to cover expenses.

- Philadelphia Airport - \$90.00/\$10.00 one way
- Newark Airport - \$95.00/\$10.00 one way
- Mercer/Trenton Airport - \$20.00/\$5.00 one way
- Trenton/Hamilton Train Station - \$25.00/\$5.00 one way



# Thanks for Helping UUCWC

By Holly Bussey

Since September, we've been actively raising awareness of our Raise Right Program—buying gift cards that generate funds for UUCWC with each purchase. We began with groceries.

During this holiday season, we encouraged people to buy gift cards. We sold more than \$4,000 in gift cards, raising more than \$250 for UUCWC. Imagine more of us buying cards to shop for groceries, medications, and other essentials. It's an easy way to support UUCWC.

We will soon make this process easier and more flexible. We want to increase the number of participants. Please get in touch with Steve Saddlemire at [raiseright@uucwc.org](mailto:raiseright@uucwc.org) for more information.

Thank you!



## UUA General Assembly 2026 Will Be Virtual

By Holly Bussey, *Denominational Affairs Liaison*

The 2026 UUA General Assembly (GA) will be a virtual event with optional opportunities for community gatherings. Alongside the Studio Site in Louisville, Kentucky, several regional satellite sites will offer in-person ways to participate and connect. Congregations are encouraged to host local gatherings or watch parties. Whether joining from a congregation, a satellite site, or from home, everyone will experience the same inspiring content and the spirit of connection that unites our movement everywhere.

The dates are June 14–21, 2026. Here's the schedule:

- **Sunday through Tuesday (June 14–16):** All-virtual General Sessions will focus on UUA's business.
- **Wednesday and Thursday (June 17–18):** This is scheduled as a flexible midweek break for rest, travel, professional organization meetings, and affinity group gatherings.
- **Friday through Sunday (June 19–21):** Whether attending at an optional in-person site or participating fully online, registrants will experience the same livestreamed worship, featured speakers, and "Meet the Moment" programming that will bring us together across all locations.

This year's GA is designed to be flexible, accessible, and meaningful for all participants.

Registration is now open. Visit <https://www.uua.org/ga/program/schedule> to register and learn more.



## UUCWC Meet & Greet: Mike Wilson and Judy MacLaury

*By Scott Cullen, CrossCurrents Editor*

This month's Meet & Greet features two longtime members whose presence and participation have helped shape UUCWC for more than three decades: Mike Wilson and Judy MacLaury.

Since first walking through our doors in the late 1980s, they've woven themselves into the life of the congregation through RE, justice work, stewardship, spiritual deepening programs, and the many conversations and connections that happen in between. Their perspectives on faith, rooted in curiosity,

community, and the freedom to seek meaning with both heart and mind, offer a beautiful window into what keeps them grounded here after all these years.

Mike and Judy talk about what first drew them to UUism, the traditions and memories they cherish, and the activities that bring them joy outside church. Their story is full of warmth, wisdom, and a deep appreciation for the relationships that have shaped their lives at UUCWC.

*What inspired you to visit UUCW for the first time in 1988 and then join in the early 1990s?*

**Mike:** Curiosity/ I liked Linda Desantis' sermons.

**Judy:** It never made sense to me that there could be only one God, given the diversity of humanity and cultures on the planet. I was interested in UUism in high school, but comments from my dad about his impression that UUs are too focused on the individual and not so much on community kept me away.

I had the impression he thought UUs were too much about the mind and not enough about the heart. But the fact that UUism allows for a multiplicity of beliefs and embraces everyone, rather than excluding those who do not subscribe to a particular dogma, was appealing to me. When I came to UUCWC, I found a congregation and

a minister who promoted a sense of community and were very much attuned to matters of the heart.

*What religion were you brought up in?*

**Judy:** Presbyterianism.

**Mike:** None. I hung around the Quakers for several years and became interested in nonviolence and civil rights.

*If you had to describe your faith journey in one word, what would it be?*

**Mike:** Connection.

*What committees/ministries at UUCWC have you participated in during your time here?*

**Judy:** Children's RE, Adult RE, Chalice Circle, Food Ministry, Wellspring, and memoir writing (briefly).

**Mike:** I taught some RE classes, served on the Council for Faith in Action, worked with UUFANJ, and was in charge of the yearly pledge drive one year.

*What's one thing about our church community that makes you feel at home?*

**Mike:** I enjoy hearing the ministers' perspectives and discussing them with fellow members.

**Judy:** I feel accepted for who and what I am, as a whole person, even with my shortcomings and despite the harm I may have done to others in my life.

*What's a favorite hymn or worship song that brings you comfort?*

**Mike:** "Blue Boat Home."

**Judy:** "De Colores, 'Tis a Gift to be Simple, and Blue Boat Home."

*Do you have a favorite church memory that always makes you smile?*

**Judy:** When our grandkids took part in the Christmas pageant as stars and an angel.

**Mike:** I enjoyed going with a group of UUs to North Carolina to listen to Rev. Dr. William Barber speak.

*What do you do for fun when you're not at UUCWC or attending an online service or UUCWC-related meeting?*

**Judy:** I like going to the theater and concerts, and I read.

**Mike:** I play with my grandkids.

*What's one piece of advice that has stuck with you throughout your life?*

**Judy:** Though it was very hard advice to follow, when I was in the midst of a long period of turmoil with my older daughter, my dad encouraged me not to take responsibility for her words and actions, especially when they were directed at me. It

was hard for me to feel guilty, and he helped me get past the distress at having been the partial cause of her anguish.

**Mike:** I have worked with emotionally and learning-disabled kids for much of my life. The piece of advice I have given to each one has been to find their success and ignore anyone or anything that tries to take it from them.

*What's your go-to comfort food?*

**Mike:** Kefir and fruit.

**Judy:** Chocolate cake!

*What's one skill or talent you have that most people don't know about?*

**Mike:** I can surf.

**Judy:** I speak French.

*What's a tradition in your family that you cherish?*

**Judy:** Celebrating Thanksgiving and Christmas with as many family members who are available.

**Mike:** Political activity.

*What was your most memorable vacation destination?*

**Mike & Judy:** A river cruise on the Seine from Paris to Normandy, with visits to Monet's home, the town where Van Gogh painted his final pieces, learning about the bombing of Nantes, and visiting the beach and cemetery in Normandy.

*What was the last book you read that you enjoyed?*

**Mike:** *Presencing: 7 Practices for Transforming Self, Society, and Business* by Otto Scharmer and Katrin Kaufer.

**Judy:** I am currently reading *Alexander Hamilton* by Ron Chernow. My dad taught American history at Trenton State (TCNJ), so we grew up endlessly (and fortunately) hearing about history, current trends and events, social movements, etc. Reading this history now, as an adult, puts the whole saga in a much broader perspective and helps me better understand the origins of the issues we face today.

*What's the one movie you could watch again and again?*

**Mike:** "Pride and Prejudice."

**Judy:** "Moonstruck" with Cher and Nicholas Cage.

*What's the last TV show you binged?*

**Judy & Mike:** "Karen Pirie," a British detective series. "Unforgotten."

*You're having a dinner party. What four people (celebrities, authors, or historical figures—past or present) would be on your guest list?*

**Mike:** Robert Putnam, Hanna Arendt, Thomas Berry, and Alexis de Tocqueville.

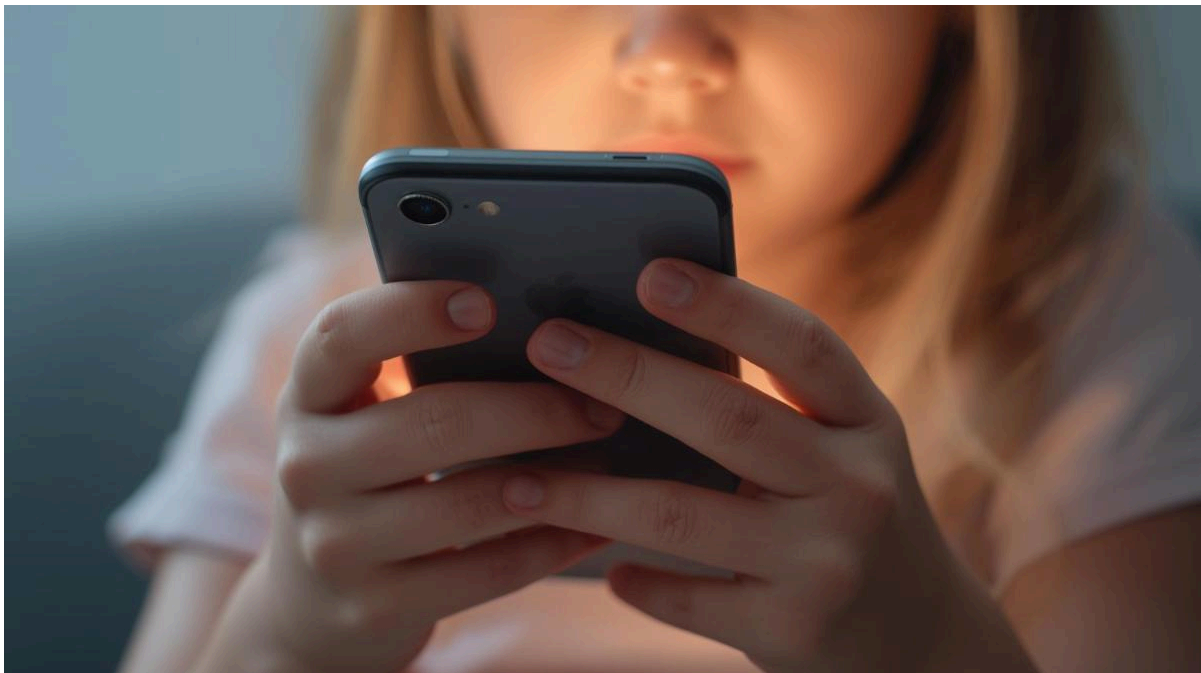
**Judy:** I would invite my parents to ask them questions I never thought to ask when they were alive, and to discuss the current state of our country with them. I would also invite Jesus, Buddha, the Dalai Lama, Desmond Tutu, and various other American historical figures.

*What's one thing you're grateful for this week?*

**Judy:** The (relative) security and safety I experience every day, contrasting with the unspeakable conditions so many in our country and across the globe live with without the means to escape to a better existence.

**Mike:** My family. I find “things” relatively unimportant. Relationships and ideas are important.

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## **Voices from UUCWC | The Girl Who Lost Freedom: A story about freedom of attention and what happens when it is lost.**

*By Mike Wilson*

On a gray Tuesday morning in Mercer County, twelve-year-old Amara Lopez sat at the kitchen table, staring at the phone she wasn't supposed to use before school. Her cereal had gone soggy. Her backpack lay unzipped on the floor. The dog pawed at her leg. But Amara didn't move.

The screen flickered upward—another video. Over the past few weeks, the algorithm had noticed how she lingered on clips of girls her age performing quick dance moves, then slowed down on videos about middle-school friendship drama. It observed the rhythm of her thumb, the microseconds when her pupils dilated, the tiny pause before she scrolled. It understood what kept her—not what she wanted, but what her biology and psychology couldn't resist.

In twenty minutes, it had taken Tuesday from her.

Her mother, Sofia, didn't see it that way. She only knew that when Amara finally hung up the phone—flushed and fidgety, like someone gasping for air—she had no idea where her homework was and had forgotten to pack lunch. They argued. They hurried. They left late. It all felt far too normal, a routine ailment that plagued too many of Amara's days.

But here was the problem: Amara didn't choose any of it.

She hadn't chosen the videos or the time spent watching them. She hadn't chosen to ignore the dog, or the cereal, or her mother's voice. Those choices were made for her by an invisible system whose only mission was to keep her attention—because attention meant profit.

And in that transfer of power, Amara's freedom disappeared.

Freedom of attention, the ability to choose what you focus on, is the quiet gateway to all other freedoms. Tech companies understand this better than philosophers: if you can subtly redirect someone's attention, you can influence their choices and actions without them ever realizing their freedom has been affected.

Attention loss diminishes freedom because the choices you never notice are the ones you cannot make, and a person without choices cannot make the decisions that create meaningful action. When algorithms hijack attention, these unseen choices vanish from awareness, and freedom collapses quietly in their absence.

By Friday, her mother realized the problem wasn't that Amara skipped violin; it was that the choice never even appeared to her. The algorithm wasn't evil, just exploitative, treating her attention as harvestable material, and in that quiet logic, an entire generation slowly began losing the capacity to choose. She had a long chat with Amara about this issue.

Based on the chat, Amara did something unusual.

The next day, she woke up earlier. She ate breakfast. She petted the dog. She took a deep breath before picking up her phone, and then she put it back down. She sat there, quietly, for a moment that felt longer than it was.

"Mom," she said, "can you help me with my science poster?"

Sofia turned, surprised, and relieved. She recognized what most adults never see: Not just a child asking for help, but a child reclaiming the smallest, most important freedom, the freedom to direct her own attention, and with it, the ability to choose her own life.





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