

The BUC Big Picture

April 2025



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April Worship

April 6: “Through the Ages”

What aging looks like and feels like depending on our point of view.

April 13: “What What We Do Does”

The postmodern philosopher Michel Foucault observed that “People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don’t know is what what they do does.” What does that mean?

April 20: “Resurrection for Unitarian Universalists”

On this Easter Sunday, can we as Unitarian Universalists find meaning in the story of resurrection?

April 27: “Environmental Hope”

Join the Environmental Action team for a celebration of Earth Day and a timely exploration of hope in these difficult days. In the words of Jane Goodall, “Hope does not deny the difficulty and all the danger that exists, but it is not stopped by them. There is a lot of darkness, but our actions create the light.”

April Plate Sharing

The recipient of our plate sharing in April is [Soulardarity](#), which was founded in 2012 when Highland Park’s city government made an agreement that allowed DTE to repossess residential streetlights to rectify a bill. But DTE didn’t just turn off the lights, they dug them up! Soulardarity works to install solar-powered lights, but it has expanded to a range of energy democracy projects. Projects have included hosting rate-payers assistance clinics to help people pay DTE bills, implementing infrastructure projects for housing energy efficiency, monitoring utility rate increases, and developing job opportunities to install energy projects. Soulardarity is building a brighter future in Highland Park with education, organizing, and people-powered clean energy by working to build a just and equitable energy system for all.

In March, we collected approximately \$1,822 for the Michigan Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Network.

Plate donations can be made via cash or check during worship services or at any time via our [online giving portal](#) (choose “Plate Collection” from the Fund drop-down) or [Venmo](#) (send payment to @BUCMI and note “Plate Collection”).

Staff “Who to Contact” List / Office Hours

Do you have an idea, question, or concern and need to know where to direct it? Wondering which staff member handles a particular area? The answers are in our **staff [“Who to Contact” list](#)**, also linked on our [home page](#) in the “Learn About Us” box in the middle of the page. This list has contact information for the minister and staff members responsible for pastoral, financial, worship, program, membership, administrative, and communications issues. **Church office hours** are also included at the top. These hours reflect when the office is open for church business and do not reflect the operating hours of the building as a whole. We kindly ask that you restrict church business (by phone and in person) to the office hours. The working hours of individual staff members do not necessarily match the office hours.

Minister's Message

Rev. Connie Grant

Wasn't it just winter?

The calendar says it's spring, and the daffodils are coming up, but is winter really over?

Spring thoughts turn to the Rummage Sale, and I'm sad that I'll miss the BUC sale at the beginning of May—but overjoyed that I'll be with my school-age grandsons as well as my adult daughter and two sons in Phoenix as I take a little time off and then participate remotely in a professional conference. I'll be gone from April 21 through May 2, reachable in the usual ways if needed.

I'm leaving a few select boxes of rummage for the sale, set aside as we finish clearing out the Chicago house that was home base for over thirty years and temporarily make Michigan our primary home.

As you know, effective May 1, compensated hours for Sara Constantakis, your Director of Congregational Life, are reduced to 30 hours per week from full-time; compensated hours for Steven Dearing, your Co-Director of Music Ministry responsible for scheduling musicians and administration of the music program as well as leading the Sound Messengers band, and Abha Dearing, your Co-Director of Music Ministry responsible for directing the Chalice Choir, are reduced/reconfigured to 15 hours per week for each of them from joint full-time (which has meant approximately 25 hours for Steven and 15 hours for Abha). Compensated hours for Shannon Snideman, your Director of Religious Education, were already reduced to 20 from 30 hours per week (and Shannon has already taken on 10 hours per week as Office Assistant). Of course, as the congregation's pledges of financial contribution approach the amount needed, your Board of Trustees and I devoutly hope that it will not be necessary to make further reductions in staff compensation and hours to balance your budget for the 2025-26 fiscal year.

In their columns below, Shannon, Steven and Abha, and Sara suggest some opportunities for congregants to be involved in the life of your church in meaningful ways, beyond your financial contributions.

This church year is winding down, and some exciting plans are in the works for the year to come.

Looking forward in faith and hope,

Rev. Connie Grant
Minister

Religious Education Musings

Shannon Snideman, Director of Religious Education

While many people will be setting out on fun adventures this summer, Religious Education programming will still be happening and we will still need volunteers to help facilitate! Our summer RE program will run every Sunday from June 8–August 31 for our Nursery (infants to age 5) and REmix (elementary and middle school).

After listening to the story in the Sanctuary, we will then head over to Green Door to begin our activities. While we hope for bright and breezy sunny days, we can't always guess what the weather will be like. Our plan is to go with the flow and have a couple of different activities planned that we can do regardless of weather. Some activities that we can do include rock painting, scavenger hunts, making our own bubble blowers... and one activity that I would like to try is cyanotyping! This is a type of photographic printing that uses the sun's ultraviolet radiation to create an image.



Some people might not want to be outside even when the weather is nice, so having an indoor option is always a good idea. To allow for children and youth to move freely between indoor and outdoor activities, it is also very important that we have adequate supervision. At least two facilitators are needed to ensure that kids are safe and well-attended. As the Director of Religious Education, I need to be able to move freely between RE spaces, but I plan to hang out with you all on most Sundays.

Are you a birder? Do you like to forage? Maybe you like to make art with nature. If you have something that you enjoy doing—inside or outside—and would like to share with our children and youth, we'd love to spend time with you! If you have a fun activity in mind and/or would like to volunteer to spend some time with our wonderful children and youth, please let me know so that we can find a day that works for you to come in. You can also visit the RE table to find the summer RE facilitator signup sheet. There is some paperwork that needs to be filled out, including a background check, and a brief facilitator orientation that can be scheduled at a time that is convenient for you.

Here are some of the other opportunities for children, youth, and families this summer:

★ [Southeast Michigan UU Peace Camp](#): July 14-17 (ages 4-12)

Northwest Unitarian Universalist Church in Southfield is hosting the annual Peace Camp in July. Children in the RE programs at local UU churches, including BUC, First UU (Detroit) and UUCF (Farmington) are welcome to attend. This is an excellent opportunity for our children to meet fellow UUs in the southeast Michigan area! The registration form is linked above, and you can always ask me for more information.

This year's theme is **Building Peace and Justice in Ourselves, Our Communities, Our Environment, and the World**. Each day will focus on a different aspect of the theme. We will teach meditation and mindfulness practices and introduce awareness of community initiatives and local social-justice projects. Children will connect with nature—including animals—and environmental justice. They will learn about cultures around the world, focusing on their social-justice initiatives. The camp will integrate

community-building games, music, cooking, comics, and the varied skills of our staff and volunteers.

There are also paid opportunities for older youth—an excellent opportunity to make some money and add some experience to a resume! If youth are interested in helping out with the camp and doing some fun activities alongside the younger kids, please get in touch with me.

Of course, if you have something cool that fits in with our theme and think it would be a great addition to our camp, let me know, too! This is another wonderful collaboration between BUC and NWUU, and it helps us build up a greater UU community here in southeast Michigan.



Midwest Unitarian Universalist Youth Camp: July 20-26 (ages 12-15)

Midwest Unitarian Universalist Youth Camp (MUUYC), also known as Marwood, is a 60+ year-old not-for-profit “rites of passage” junior/senior high summer camp designed for youth to attend for four consecutive years, beginning as they enter 7th grade. However, youth going into 8th or 9th grade can still attend!

Marwood creates a culture with values that we believe are the most important qualities and behaviors to actively demonstrate and live. These values, expressed in Unitarian Universalist covenants, guide and form the development of learning processes in our courses and various camp programs.

Although I never attended Marwood in my youth, I know several people who have, including the Pulvers! And I’ve witnessed how Marwood’s excellent programming has helped youth grow into incredible leaders. Click here to find out more about what [“Marwood Is”](#)...



Our BUC Family UU Network (FUUN) also has some fun things in mind for the summer, including a Dream Cruise party and meeting up for the Detroit Area UU Picnic on Belle Isle. We’ll also likely have another outdoor Movie Night and Beach Day. Reach out to Jordan Schwarz (jbschwarz@gmail.com) for more information and to learn about upcoming events in the meantime!

Music Memos

Abha and Steven Dearing, Co-Directors of Music Ministry

Almost 15 years ago, when we first won this Co-Director of Music Ministry job, we negotiated that the work schedule at BUC coincide with the teaching positions that we both held. We've always tried to live and show our kids that family comes first, which seemingly conflicted with working on Sundays (when do we get a pajama day? as we dragged our kids to RE). But having the summertime to chase our Rahk and Raina around the Midwest as they competed in baseball and softball was how we made up for two parents working on the weekends from September through June.

Having the choir wrap up their duties on Choir Sunday and start up again on Homecoming Sunday gave congregants and musical guests opportunities to provide music during the summers. This was often a time when BUC did some experimenting in worship services. We have heard that attendees find summer services refreshing with a mix of music displayed, especially when it falls outside our typical choir, band, piano realm.

This year, we are making a special plea to all of our beloved congregants: consider sharing your gift of music with our community. Are you nervous? Worried about how skilled you are? Anxious that it will not go over well? The two of us have worked with hundreds of people over the years: coaching and coaxing folx to perform at a higher level than they thought possible. We invite you to throw your hat (or voice or instrument) into the ring.

Volunteer to play or sing at a summer worship service and you will be glad you did: for yourself and as a service to our BUC family.

Membership Matters

Sara Constantakis, Director of Congregational Life

Spring in Michigan can be a liminal time. Spring weather is never predictable, often swinging between two extremes in the space of days. On more than one occasion recently, I have turned the heat off and opened the windows of our home one day, only to close the windows and turn the heat back on the very next day. This gives this time of year a very transitional feel.

We are also in a time of transition as a congregation. As we near the end of our first church year of interim ministry with Rev. Connie, there have been many changes, with more to come. In the midst of this change, I came across something in an email newsletter from one of my favorite writers that really struck me. This writer has struggled with a couple different addictions over the course of her life, and in this particular newsletter, she shared her feeling that she might not ever really get over them, that she would be back and forth between getting better and worse, for the rest of her life. As part of her thinking about this, she shared a “fun animal fact” that one of her readers had in turn shared with her:

“...turtles have survived for eons, but they rarely evolve because of their hard protective shells. Meanwhile, octopuses have almost no protection—so they evolve constantly. Faster than any animal.”

She didn't explicitly state it in her newsletter, but it was easy to extend this metaphor to humans and how we approach evolution and change. And what I took from it is that there is room for everyone's gifts, in communities (like ours), in larger societies, and in the world. Turtles have special strengths and skills that have allowed the species to survive for eons, even if they haven't evolved. The continuous evolvment of octopi is also a special strength and skill, but that way of being sounds exhausting, too. Perhaps some balanced place between never evolving and constantly evolving is a good place to be... and perhaps the turtles and octopi can help each other out along the way.

A lot is evolving and will continue to evolve in our beloved community in the immediate and long term. Some staff members (including myself) will be working

reduced hours starting in about a month. This will mean changes in programming and the need for more volunteer support, as you read about elsewhere in this newsletter. In May we will be voting on leadership positions for the next church year, and the new business of our Unitarian Universalist Association will be discussed in June at General Assembly. In the wider world, things continue to evolve at the federal level as an oppressive presidential administration wreaks havoc. In nature, signs of spring are emerging... and retreating. Whether we see ourselves as a turtle, or an octopus, or neither, may we turn to each other for the strength and support we need to move through changes and evolve, each in our own unique way.

Board Minutes

Hello from the BUC Board! As we enter the fourth quarter of our fiscal year, we wanted to recap some of our accomplishments in the 2024-25 church year:

Strategy and Vision. The Strategic Planning Task Force has begun the strategic planning process. The task force will conduct a survey of congregants' skills and talents and will report to the Board about how to choose the right people for the committee.

Governance. The Board approved convening a Policies and Bylaws work group, led by Rev. Connie, to revise these documents for greater clarity. Two Board members are part of this group.

Communication. The Board has held regular town halls and set up an email for feedback: buc.board@bucmi.org. Please remember that you can review the [minutes from Board meetings](#), as well as the [monthly financial reports](#), on the BUC website.

Budget. The Board is in the process of finalizing a balanced 2025-26 budget. In addition, the Board has developed a 2-3 year financial plan and is planning for the long-term growth of BUC's endowments.

Facility Needs. The Board appointed a transition team to prepare for our sharing space with Birmingham-Bloomfield Montessori. This lease will fund the long-term maintenance needs of our building. Board members have been part of this transition work.

These projects help solidify BUC and will put us in a strong position when we embark on a ministerial search. Thank you to all who have agreed to serve on these work teams!

We will have our next town hall on Sunday, April 13 at 11:30. We hope to see you there!

In faith,
Your Board of Trustees

Program Events & Information

BUC Alliance
Tuesday, April 8
7:00 pm in the Pavilion
Speaker: Marilyn Kelly



Join the BUC Alliance for an **evening program on Tuesday, April 8 at 7:00 pm in the Pavilion.** Marilyn Kelly will be giving a talk entitled “Just When We Thought We’d Seen It All,” on dealing with government tumult in times of rapid change. We hope to see you there!

For questions and/or more information, contact Carole Wiseman (586-446-0165) of the Alliance.

Canned Goods Collection

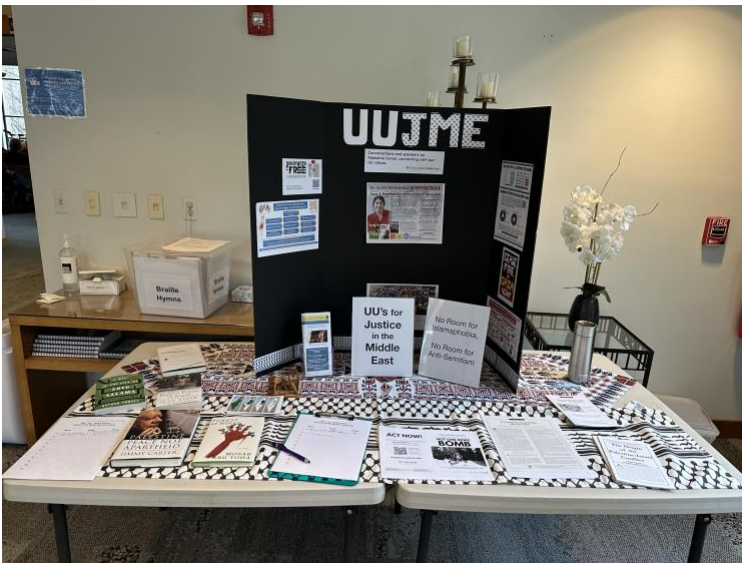


On Easter Sunday, April 20, children and youth are invited to participate in a “canned goods hunt” at 12:00 pm. They will hunt for the hidden cans and then trade in the cans they find for a small bag of toys and treats. Our junior- and senior-high youth will help with hiding the cans and assist children in the cooperative “hunt.”

Please bring in your donations of canned goods by Sunday, April 13 and place them in the labeled bin at the greeter table. Pull-tab lids that do not require a can opener are preferred, and please check cans for expiration dates.

Canned proteins like beans, chicken, and fish are excellent meal staples! After the “hunt,” the canned goods will be donated to [Lighthouse](#).

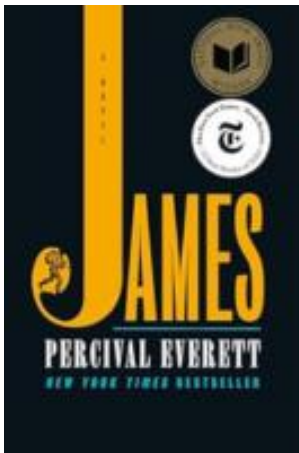
Conversations about Justice in the Middle East



Beginning Sunday, April 13, join BUC UUs for Justice in the Middle East for a conversation **every second Sunday at 9:00 am in the Small Conference Room.**

Reading, watching, listening... all the input is helpful, but having an opportunity to talk it through with other BUCers gives us deeper understanding. So, please join us at 9:00 am every second Sunday. Our

UU faith requires much of us beyond the church doors and into the wider world.



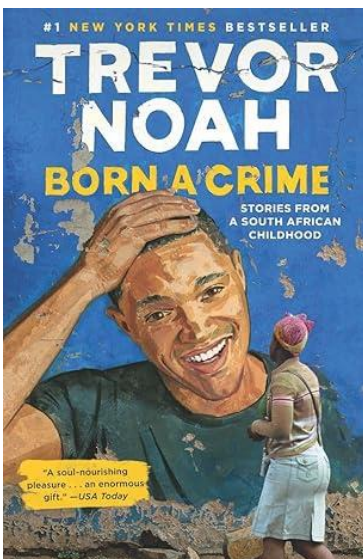
BUC Racial Justice Book Group
April discussion:
James by Percival Everett

Monday, April 14
6:00-7:30 pm

The Racial Justice Book Group is a project for BUCers who are striving to understand and work to eliminate racial prejudice from our community and ourselves. All are invited to join the discussions. The group meets on Zoom on the second Monday of the month in September, October, November, January, February, March, April, and May. Zoom details will be on the [BUC calendar](#) and shared in the weekly update email the week prior. This month's discussion of *James* by Percival Everett will be on **Monday, April 14 from 6:00-7:30 pm**. For questions and/or more information, contact group coordinator Mary Masson at (248) 568-6544 or mmasson@wowway.com.

Coming up **Monday, May 12:**

Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood
by Trevor Noah





Come celebrate Passover with BUC, First UU Detroit, and Northwest UU at our inter-congregational Seder on **Friday, April 18 at 5:00 pm in Hodas Hall.**

RSVP required at [this link](#)

Bring a dish to pass (Jewish cuisine preferred) and a phone or tablet. If you are unsure about what to bring or have other questions, email:

Shannon Snideman
shannon.snideman@bucmi.org

Eva Leventer
(First UU/NWUU DRE)
eva.leventer@northwest.org

MAMA's Coffeehouse

a monthly acoustic music concert series

Income from MAMA's
Coffeehouse (after operating
expenses) benefits BUC

Saturday, April 19

Badass Women Band

Aurora & Antheia opens

doors open at 7:00 pm

concert begins at 7:30 pm

Admission: \$20 (\$18 student/senior)

Cash or check at door only



What began as an outlet for Annie Capps's solo project ("How Can I Say This?") grew into a concept that features multiple individual songwriters performing together as a cohesive and collaborative musical unit. This band of powerhouse female artists fuses each member's individual rockin', folky, and funky sensibilities for an unforgettable and dynamic alliance. Featuring Annie Bacon (vocals, guitar, bass), Annie Capps (vocals, guitar, banjo), Sara Gibson (cello), Carolyn Koebel (vocals, drums/percussion), Cori Somers (violin) and Julianna Wilson (vocals/bass), the **Badass Women Band** is a force to be reckoned with. Experience a variety show filled with soulful tunes and empowering performances that will keep you grooving, thinking, and feeling deeply.



Aurora & Antheia recently formed to foster the creativity of sound, texture, and improvisations by the diverse and talented musicians Cori Somers (violin), Laurie Jarski (cello/multi-string instrumentals), and Carolyn Koebel (percussion).

Upcoming events:

May 17: Mustard's Retreat 50th Anniversary concert, Ellis and M.E. open

News from BUC's Walt Whitman School Team

We wanted to keep our faithful and generous supporters updated regarding activities that your funding provides for Walt Whitman Elementary School in Pontiac. The Book Trolley program provides weekly access to books for grades K-5. On Thursday mornings, our volunteers visit classrooms with carts stocked with books to fit varying reading levels and interests. The students peruse and choose a book that they keep until the following week. Additionally, our program provides school clothing, shoes, and other items such as boxes of tissues, snacks, food for special events, and other items that meet the needs of students.

NEW this year, we are excited to partner with Ministries with Pontiac, a branch of Kirk in the Hills church, to fund the **Acheson Mobile Planetarium from Cranbrook Institute of Science** to visit the school for two days in April. Each classroom will spend 45 minutes taking an unforgettable journey in the portable, digital



Image courtesy of Cranbrook Planetarium website

planetarium. Students will discover the night sky, distant stars, planets, constellations, and more. Grades K and 1 will join Big Bird, Elmo, and HuHu Zhu on their imaginary trip of the sun, moon, stars, Big Dipper, and North Star, ending back on Earth celebrating the idea that even though they live in different countries, they share the same sky. Grades 2-5 will experience an interactive show that is narrated live. The students will embark on a mesmerizing and educational journey through space, watching the moon change phases, tell stories by playing with connect-the-dot stars, and travel to the eight planets, including Pluto.

THANK YOU for your continued support of this program, which enables us to provide educational programs, necessities, and fun experiences for the students at Walt Whitman Elementary School. It enhances their education and helps to close gaps often experienced in their community.

With Gratitude,

BUC Walt Whitman Elementary School Team,
also known as Communities United for Children

Spotlight: Economic Justice

Goldsmith Scholarship Fund

Background

The Birmingham Unitarian Church Goldsmith Scholarship Fund was created by Birmingham Unitarian Church with funds from the estate of Stuart Goldsmith. Mr. Goldsmith bequeathed a portion of his estate to BUC to assist individuals with receiving a college education who would not otherwise be able to do so financially. This scholarship is managed by the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan. They facilitate the communication with Pontiac High School counselors and the portal for students to apply for many scholarships, including ours. The portal is open to applicants until the end of March.

Impact

Since its inception in 2012, the Goldsmith Scholarship Fund has awarded over 30 scholarships totaling \$62,000. The purpose of the Goldsmith Scholarship is to provide educational scholarship support to current and former graduates of Pontiac High School and its predecessors. One outstanding new scholar was identified as the 2024 recipient. They received a scholarship worth \$5,000 and will be invited to renew their scholarship for the next three years, for a total potential award of \$20,000.

2024 Recipient: *Kimaii McCloud*

Kimaii graduated from Pontiac High School in 2024 with a 3.8 grade point average. She was an Honor Roll student and graduate of the Upward Bound Leadership Development Summer Academy. She maintained a part-time job at the Pontiac Public Library during all four years of high school and completed a Certified Nursing Assistant program through Pontiac High School during her junior year. Kimaii is passionate about helping others and currently attends Oakland University where she is pursuing a nursing degree.

Contact Kym Worth if you have any questions (kymlworth@gmail.com)

It's Bake-Off Time!

Sunday, June 1 after service in Hodas Hall

Join us in Hodas Hall after service on Sunday, June 1 for BUC's beloved Bake-Off fundraiser in support of the Coming of Age Heritage Trip! Start with a homemade soup and salad lunch. Browse the rows of delicious baked goods, and place your bids in the silent auction. Choose from a selection of "Buy-It-Now" baked goods, special treats, and unique cards handmade by our Living By Heart artists. Then prepare your paddles for the finale, an exciting live bidding auction of the spectacular creations of our celebrity bakers!



Please come and be a part of this cherished annual event! We need all kinds of volunteers: creative bakers, confection artists, soup artisans, courteous kitchen and dining hall staff, and attentive auction assistants. Your time and talents are the key ingredients that will make this event a success. Look for sign-up sheets at the RE table in Hodas Hall after service, where an RE Committee member will be happy to discuss ways you can be a part of this BUC tradition. You can also sign up online using the links below, or look for "Volunteer for Bake-Off" in the group of buttons near the bottom of the BUC home page.

[SILENT AUCTION BAKER SIGNUP](#): Bring in items for the Silent Auction and/or "Buy-It-Now" table, though we may move items into the Live Auction!

[LIVE AUCTION BAKER SIGNUP](#): Bring in large and/or specialty items for the Live Auction.

[SOUP MAKER SIGNUP](#): Bring in a pot of soup, stew, or chili for the luncheon.

[SILENT AUCTION VOLUNTEERS](#): Help with receiving donations, pricing items, and monitoring bid sheets.

[LIVE AUCTION VOLUNTEERS](#): Help with receiving items and logging bid numbers. We also need auctioneers!

[KITCHEN VOLUNTEERS](#): Help with setup and cleanup of the food items (setting out pots, salad, and rolls and cleaning dishes).

[SOCIAL HALL VOLUNTEERS](#): Help with setting up the tables and space for the luncheon and auction, as well as general assistance.

[SALES VOLUNTEERS](#): Help with ticket sales, issuing paddles for the Live Auction and processing transactions.



UUWomenspirit Spring Event

*The Beginning is the End –
The End is the Beginning*

May 14–18

**The Mountain Learning and Retreat
Center in Highlands, NC**

Join us as we explore the cycles of our lives, from Maiden to Mother to Crone or from Teacher to Warrior to Queen. Each phase offers a new awareness both of

ourselves and of our sacred relationships with those around us. Find out more here: www.uuwomenspirit.org.

BUCers at the Theatre

Sunday matinees at the Detroit Repertory Theatre

BUCers at the Theatre invites you to the Detroit Rep's 68th season! BUCers can join together to carpool or meet up at the [Detroit Repertory Theatre](http://DetroitRepertoryTheatre.com) for a Sunday matinee. This legendary arts venue in the heart of Detroit has a lobby bar, cocktail lounge, café with vegan options, and a professional show—all in a beautiful art gallery setting.

Sunday, June 8: *Covenant* by York Walker. Two years after he disappeared, a struggling guitarist returns to his small town a blues star, sparking rumors he made a trade with a devil.

Tickets - \$18 general seating with BUC discount (\$30 at door)

1:00 pm - lobby, art gallery, and café/bistro open

2:00 pm - curtain opens promptly

Reserve by text or email to Maryl Kacir Huntington:

(313) 407-4377 or marylk@live.com

Pay Maryl in cash/Venmo or by check to DRT at the show