

THE AMHERST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST NEWSLETTER

121 North Pleasant Street, P.O. Box 502, Amherst Massachusetts 01004

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Important Information

STREET ADDRESS: 121 North Pleasant Street,
Amherst, MA 01002

MAILING ADDRESS: P.O. Box 502, Amherst, MA
01004-0502

INTERIM MINISTER:

The Rev. Cynthia Frado

413-253-2848 (office) or 508-320-5771 (cell) or
therevfrado@aol.com Contact her for an appointment.

CONGREGATIONAL ADMINISTRATOR:

Judy Mitrolka

413-253-2848 (office) or office@uusocietyamherst.org
Office hours: Monday through Friday, 10:A.M.-2:00 P.M.

DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:

Rebecca Fricke 413-687-8722 or rebfricke@gmail.com

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC: Brenda Miller

413-253-7855 or bmmiller.music@gmail.com

BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

President: Bo Mack 413-253-3530
rmack@umass.edu

Vice President: Karen Fisk 413-210-0960
karenmargaretfisk@gmail.com

Clerk: Lynne Latham 508-308-5877
latham.lynne.m@gmail.com

Treasurer: Elliott Kelly 413-559-9937
spahrkellys@gmail.com

NEWSLETTER

Copy Editor: Janis Gray, 413-259-1584
Production Editor: John Foster, 413-253-2632
Deadline for submissions: 15th of each month.
Please sign submissions, so we may reach you if
we have questions. Submit entries one of two
ways:

1. Email it to jsgray@crocker.com.
2. Mail it to 219 Wendell Road, Shutesbury MA
01072.

Please limit entries to 500 words (100 for the
“For Your Information” section). Submissions
may be edited to save space or to maintain a con-
sistent style. Thank you!

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Schedule of Services

Sunday, December 3, 10:30 A.M. – *Our UU Theological Tapestry: The Christian Imperative of Forgiveness, Love and Service*

The Reverend Cynthia A. Frado preaching

This is the second in Rev. Cindy's series called "Our Theological Tapestry." Christianity is one of the foundational threads of Unitarian Universalism, yet, many people have a hard time understanding how it relates to UUism today. Whatever your personal theological perspective, you do not want to miss this service! In fact, invite your family, neighbors and friends who question our diversity of faith.

Sunday, December 10, 10:30 A.M. – *Defying the Darkness*

The Reverend Cynthia A. Frado preaching

Chanukah is fast approaching. The timeless story of the Maccabees reclaiming and rededicating their temple in Jerusalem with a single oil lamp that lasted way beyond its usual burning time is a powerful metaphor for the tenacity of the human spirit and the oftentimes miraculous power of the Universe to give us what we need. Come into the light and warmth of this community as we sing songs, spin tales, and celebrate the wondrous spirit of life among us!

Sunday, December 17, 10:30 A.M. – *Winter Solstice*

A whole-congregation service led by our children and the Rev. Cynthia A. Frado.

Our Annual Potluck Holiday Lunch will follow the service.

Today is our Dedicated Offering Sunday

Sunday, December 24 – *Christmas Eve*

NO SERVICE ON SUNDAY MORNING. Be with us that evening!

The Reverend Cynthia A. Frado officiating

5:30 P.M. This family service will be filled with carols, ancient stories, beautiful music, and candlelight (safe for all ages)! Carolyn Walker on guitar and violin, and **Brenda Miller**, our Director of Music, performing.

7:00 P.M. Come in from the cold and join us for a more traditional service with lessons, carols, lots of beautiful music, and candlelight (safe for all ages)! **Brenda Miller** and the UUSA choir (and guests?) will be performing.

Sunday, December 31, 10:30 A.M. – *Blessings*

The Sunday Services Committee

What does it mean to bless one another? Is it an expression of good wishes? Is a blessing something we say or something we do – a religious ritual or a way of living our lives? These questions from the Rev. Dan Schatz, minister at the Unitarian Congregation of West Chester, PA, will be discussed on the last day of the year. We will also participate in our annual ritual of writing our personal wishes for the new year and releasing them in a ceremony of hope.

Musicians who would like to share their music at this service should contact **Carol Rothery** at carolrothery@comcast.net before December 22.

Many sermons and readings are posted on our website, www.uusocietyamherst.org. Click on the "SERMON ARCHIVE" button on the right side of the home page, and then on the title of the sermon you wish to read.

Musings from the Interim Minister's Inkwell

When the Nights are Long, the Stars Shine Bright

For some unknown reason, I have had a harder time this year adjusting to the end of Daylight Savings Time. Besides the fact that my circadian rhythm never got the memo to readjust, I am more aware that I seem to be doing a whole lot more driving in the dark. And so what do I do? I tend to look up. I search for the moon and the stars, and sometimes I even pull over on a clear night and do my gazing from a safe place. And when there's cloud cover that is blocking out all cosmic light, I navigate the two "eyes" of my car (Nelle) to guide me through the inky darkness and help me find home, again.

As we plunge deeper into this season of more darkness than light, I'm reminded of all those moments throughout our human journey when we each struggle with "the dark night of our soul," when we become overwhelmed by the crises and challenges and grief that confront us. In such instances we oftentimes find it difficult to "see the light" which will lead us to a better place of emotional and physical safety and equanimity. So we look for the metaphorical moon and stars to guide us out of the darkness of despair, pain and suffering. Sometimes it feels as if the void is bottomless and the light, itself, has been snuffed out.

THEN, someone turns on their light, and another, and another. They are lights of kindness and thoughtfulness, of compassion, healing and hope. Whether they are like a single candle in the night that makes us feel safe and steadier, or like strings of Christmas lights that bring a smile to our face, each sparkling beam is helping us to see our way through the darkness that we might find home again.

If anything, this season reminds us that we, too, can be guiding lights for each other.

My prayer for you in this holiday season is that you will find peace and comfort and joy beneath the guiding lights of the heavens when the nights are long and the way seems dark. And when the moon and the stars are obscured by black clouds, may you be blessed by the light of others to illuminate your world so you can be welcomed home by the beauty of your own reflection in their eyes.

Blessings on you and yours . . .

Rev. Cindy

Dedicated Offerings

Dedicated Offerings provide a way for our Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst community to recognize and financially support worthy organizations engaged in projects that reflect our guiding Unitarian-Universalist principles.

On one Sunday every month (except for June, July, and August), we schedule a Dedicated Offering (DO), recognizing that our Society needs our support on the other Sundays of the month. Dedicated Offerings are suggested by both individuals and committees of the Society, and the program is managed by the Minister and the Dedicated Offering Committee. Our goal is to cover a wide range of areas of need in our area and in the larger world, including these categories: local, regional, national, international, environmental, medical, educational, animal rights, arts/music/culture, and different ages and genders. Recipients for FY18 have been chosen. Forms for suggesting recipients for next year are available in the Meetinghouse office.

Thank you for showing your support for the Dedicated Offering program, not only with your contributions to the DO recipients themselves, but also with your contributions to the Society on other Sundays when our budget counts on those receipts. Remember that no one is required to contribute to our Dedicated Offering recipients – this is a voluntary initiative.

The November Dedicated Offering raised \$1,042 for **The Amherst Survival Center**.

On Sunday, December 17, the UUSA will receive a dedicated offering for **The Hampshire Mosque Parking Lot Project**.

As many of you already know, The Hampshire Mosque is a newly renovated building in Hadley, just over the Amherst line. Unfortunately, the Town of Hadley will not give them an occupancy permit until they grade and pave their parking lot. The total cost is estimated to be around \$85,000. Members of the Mosque have already raised \$40,000 on their own. **Rev. Frado** started a GoFundMe page that has raised approximately \$9,000, and a recent Silent Auction and dinner added an additional \$21,000 to the project. They need about \$15,000 more to traverse the gulf that will allow them to pray in their own spiritual home. We were able to help them in the past with their building renovations, and now we hope to offer them some additional funds toward their goal to worship in their own space. If you are able to lend your support to our Muslim neighbors, it will be greatly appreciated!

Membership

Please welcome our newest members! **Shawn MacLaren** of Amherst, and **Steve Ransford**, also of Amherst, signed our venerable Membership Book on Sunday, November 19.

New email address Please update your UU Society directory's contact information for **Jill Sherman**. Her new email address is jillsherman20@comcast.net.

Ministerial Search Committee

SEARCH BY THE NUMBERS

Greetings from your Ministerial Search Committee (MSC),

The big news is that we were ready to “go live” with our Congregational Record on November 30, making it confidentially available to ministers in search through a secure web server run by the UUA. Through the following weeks, we learn through the UUA Transitions office which ministers express an interest in our congregation. This phase begins the exciting process of learning about and exchanging in-depth information packets with prospective candidates. In the new year we will be conducting phone interviews by Skype, reviewing references, and then narrowing the initial list of interested ministers to a shortlist of candidates the Search Committee will meet with for in-person weekends beginning in February. In the meantime, this month we will have our third consultation with UU Ministerial Search Representative Debby Bergh, who will provide advice on preparing for our pre-candidate interviews and how to tackle our intensive task list in the new year.

We thought it might interest you to see some of the numbers we’ve gathered from our congregation and the UUA.

129 – members in the UUSA. [Editor’s note: Two members signed the book after this article was written. We are now up to 131!]

115 – members and friends who took the Ministerial Search survey.

86 – members and friends participating in 11 cottage meetings.

80 – attended the Beyond Categorical Thinking (BCT) sermon;

39 – participated in the BCT workshop.

67 – UUA congregations in search for a full-time settled minister this year; 14 of those, in Massachusetts.

17 – number of meetings our MSC has held between our first meeting in June and the end of November, not counting the cottage meetings, staff interviews, etc.

6 – number of Ministerial Search Committee members.

2 – number of MSC retreats.

UUA Ministerial Search Numbers from last year (2016-17)

112 – ministers in search;

52 – UUA congregations in search for a full-time settled minister.

96 – ministers identifying as white;

40 – white ministers called as candidates to a congregation.

70 – ministers identifying as heterosexual (non-trans identified);

30 – heterosexual people called as candidates to a congregation.

50 – ministers identified as B/G/L/T in search;

20 – B/G/L/T ministers called as candidates to a congregation.

16 – ministers of color in search.

10 – ministers of color called as candidates to a congregation.

26 – women ministers offered a call; 21 – men ministers offered a call; 3 – transgender ministers offered a call.

24 – ministers with a disability in search; 7 – offered a call.

17 – ministers in search between the ages of 25-34; 15 – ministers in search over 60 years of age.

We believe that our congregation is very attractive to prospective ministers for many reasons – our location in the beautiful Pioneer Valley with its many cultural, educational, and recreational opportunities – but particularly in the commitment of our members to the strength and vitality of our congregation.

We are excited to be moving into this new stage of deliberation and honored to take on this important work on behalf of all of you.

Yours in love,

The 2017-18 Search Committee: Carolyn Cave, Jenn Chylack, Lisa Cyr, Mary Herman, Anne Perkins and Steve Rice.



Religious Education Ministry

Happy Holidays!

May this holiday season be filled with love, rest and fun.

- This December the children in RE will be preparing for the Whole Congregation service on December 17. The service will incorporate ideas and practices they are learning from **Lesley Smith's** mindfulness Sundays.
- In the preschool **Jacy** will talk about families and start to explore the different winter holidays celebrated around the world. Children will create their own family boxes and learn about the families of other children. Jacy has also incorporated mindfulness practice and emotional awareness at circle time.
- By the end of the month of December, our middle school youth will have visited the Catholic Newman Center, The Jewish Community Center and a Baptist church. For every visit to a Neighboring Faith, there is one Sunday where they debrief and attend services at the UUSA.
- Youth Group will be helping out at Stone Soup and our 9th and 10th graders will be finishing up the first half of their OWL program.

If you are interested in getting involved with RE please come and talk to me. We welcome new ideas and new perspectives.

Finally, I want to say how grateful I am to the volunteers who are putting time and energy into making the RE program vibrant.

Be well,

Rebecca Fricke, DRE

Mindfulness Group UUSA member **Jessica Murphy** offers a mindfulness group to our UUSA congregation. The next dates and times are Tuesday, December 5 and Tuesday, December 19, 7:00-8:00 P.M. If you are interested in participating, please contact Jess at 413-575-1963 or jessica.mindfulness@gmail.com for details.

Social Events

The Men's Breakfast Group meets on Wednesdays at 7:00 A.M. at Kelly's Restaurant (314 College Street, Amherst). Contact **Michael Sussman** at msussma@music.umass.edu for details.

Women's Lunch The Women's Lunch Group meets every other Thursday for conversation and local, inexpensive cuisine. The next luncheon is scheduled for Thursday, December 14 at a place to be determined. We welcome every woman, whether new to our Society or a longer-time member or friend. It is not necessary to RSVP, but if you have questions, need help finding a ride, or want to be on the e-notification list, contact **Sophie Rogers** at 413-772-9814 or sophiesailing@gmail.com.

Rhythms of Life: Evening of Drumming, Rattling and Merriment, Saturday, December 16, 7:00 – 8:30 P.M. in the Willie Eaton Social Hall. Bring drums and rattles for yourself and to share. This will be an evening of free-form letting loose through rhythm. No experience necessary!

UUSA Open Studio: Are you a painter? Once in a while, would you enjoy some company while you paint and appreciate getting helpful feedback on your work? If so, this is for you! UUSA will be holding Open Studio for painters of all media and all levels in our beautiful Social Hall on nine more Fridays this winter. You can paint or draw whatever you'd like: bring photo references to paint from, finish something you started elsewhere, such as plein air pieces, or just make up something. You can come to one or come to all sessions– it's up to you! We will paint from 9:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M., then share a bag lunch and friendly critique from 12:00 P.M. to 1:00 P.M. Next sessions will be held on the following dates:

December 8 (note this new date!) & 15 & 29

January 12 & 26

February 9 & 23

March 3 & 23

There are just four things you need to do:

Continued on next page:

Let us know each week when you are coming by emailing SusannePersonette@gmail.com so we know how many people to expect.

Bring \$5 cash each time to help offset the expenses of opening the space.

Bring your own cheap plastic shower curtain to protect the floors and tables around your work area.

Bring all your own paints, brushes, canvases, portable easel, etc.

Email me with any questions. Hope to paint with you this winter!

Susanne Personette



Ten artists at the first Open Studio on November 10 had a wonderful time painting, then had lunch and talked about their work.

UUSA Holiday Lunch Pot Luck

Sunday December 19

Immediately following the Solstice Service

Suggested Food Contributions by Last Name:

A-E: Main Dishes

F-K: Desserts

L-S: Appetizers

T-X: Salads



Come Enjoy our Community,

Holiday Music and Good Cheer!

Questions? Call Rebecca Fricke 413-687-8722.

Music Notes

Hello from the Music Department!! I am putting out a plea for a **short-term loan** of a good **electronic keyboard with stand and pedal** for our choir.

Please contact **Brenda Miller** at bmmiller.music@gmail.com if you can help out. Thanks!!

Fundraising



The Perfect Gift

Just in time for holiday giving, UUSA now has Big Y and Stop and Shop gift cards in just \$10 amounts. They are perfect as stocking stuffers, gifts to teachers, and donations to holiday baskets. We also have cards in larger amounts. When you buy the card, you get the full amount to spend on groceries, and UUSA gets up to 6% support for our congregation.

Continued on next page:

Cards are available during the social hour each Sunday. You will notice that members of the Finance Committee have taken over this fundraiser. We all give **Carolyn Cave** many thanks for beginning this program and for staffing it for so long. It has become an important source of support for our Society, and we greatly appreciate her leadership in bringing this opportunity to all of us.

Our Caring Ministries



December dedicates its gentle snow
To the hurried ways its people go...
And asks each day a bit of silence
On the Christmas way...

A star to follow
Through the neon night...
A touch of love to reaffirm
The pricelessness of right...
A mistletoe of merriment
To deck the dawn...

And a stable ...softly...in my heart
Where I may pause to be reborn.

Francis Anderson
UU minister and poet

Our Minister, Caring Circle, and Pastoral Care Team are available to help in times of need.

Our Caring Circle coordinators are **Catharine Porter** and **Clare Bertrand**. Please contact one of them or your own Caring Person for rides, food, and simple needs. Caring Circle members are **Clare Bertrand, Linda Callahan, Carolyn Cave, Sue Kelly, Karen Mack, Martha Nelson, Catharine Porter, Susan Rice, Chas Stevenson, Lynn Sussman** and **Gordon Wyse**.

Our Pastoral Care Team co-coordinators are **Pete Rogers** and **Mary Wyse**. Other members are **The Reverend Elizabeth Alcaide, Charlie Atwood, The Reverend Cindy Frado, Bo Mack, Fran Plumer, and Libby Stanforth**. Please contact one of them for more complex or personal needs.

We hold in our hearts **John and Susan Barbaro, Jan Cole-Stryker, Vicki Hinson-Smith, Ann Howard, and Millis Mershon**.

Extending joy, peace, love, and never-ending rebirth to you, yours, and to all the world in this special season of light-in-darkness.

From our Caring Circle, Pastoral Care Team, Small Groups, and Minister

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee will meet on Wednesday, December 13, at 7:15 P.M. at the Meetinghouse, in Judy's office.

Green Sanctuary

For our October Action Table, we asked Amherst UUs to contact their Town Meeting members requesting support for two articles that members were working on with outside groups. This action helped the two articles to pass: (1) a new bylaw requiring that new municipal buildings be built to Zero Energy standards, and (2) a resolution to bring the town to 100% Renewable Energy and to consider a comprehensive model to localize energy resources called Community Choice Energy, also known as Community Choice Aggregation, which would rapidly accelerate Amherst's transition to renewable energy. The Zero Energy Bylaw is believed to be the first such bylaw in the nation. It passed by an overwhelming 70% of the town meeting members. The resolution passed unanimously. The outside groups are continuing to aggressively assist the Town in understanding the technical aspects of Zero Energy buildings and to figure out the financing if there are increased costs. They

will also hold educational forums for the public on Zero Energy and on CCA's.

For our November Action table, we decided to thank our US legislators for continuing to work against climate change, in the face of opposition at the national level. We presume that it must be harder than ever to try and take care of the planet, with climate deniers in power in Washington. We sent off more than 50 postcards, thanks to many of you who stopped by the action table. We thanked:

Senator Elizabeth Warren, for opposing Scott Pruitt's nomination, and for challenging the US Chamber of Commerce. They are both climate deniers, in positions of power.

Senator Ed Markey, for co-writing the American Clean Energy and Security Act, working to prevent drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, opposing the Keystone XL Pipeline and supporting legislation to repeal the free-drilling and tax subsidies oil and gas industries receive every year.

Representative Jim McGovern, for his opposition to the silencing of EPA scientists and to offshore drilling.

If you missed the action table and want to contact them yourself, it would be easy! You can call or write. You don't need to say a lot. The important thing is to let them know that you appreciate their work. And thanks for all YOU do, too!

Contact information:

Senator Elizabeth Warren 317 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510 Phone: (202) 224-4543	Senator Ed Markey 255 Dirksen Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510 202-224-2742	Rep. Jim McGovern 438 Cannon House Office Building Washington DC 20515 202-225- 6101
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Look for the Green Sanctuary Committee's Action Table in the Social Hall on the second Sunday of every month. We will provide information on an environmental issue and a way for members of the congregation to contact legislators or other key people. We want to make it easy for you to take action on critical issues. Please visit us!

The Green Sanctuary Committee will meet on Thursday, December 28, 7:00 P.M. at the home of Gordon and Mary Wyse, 219 Lincoln Ave., Amherst.

Social Action



Just One Thing On December 17 a collection will occur for the Survival Center. A basket will be placed in the foyer for donations. The holidays are a demanding time for everyone, and more so for people with limited income. Please be generous as you help fill our basket with much-needed foods. Hearty soups and stews and canned beans as well as winter socks, diapers and feminine sanitary supplies are needed this month. As always, anything you can give is most appreciated. THANK YOU for your continuous support. For information contact **Mary Beth Seminario**, mbsem@comcast.net.

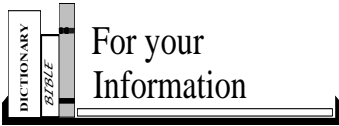
Not Bread Alone On Saturday, December 30, eight UUs will be needed at Not Bread Alone (the soup kitchen at First Congregational Church) to help provide lunch. Under the supervision of the kitchen leader, we create new dishes from donated food. It's always an adventure, as we never know until that morning what foods will be on hand. No experience is needed as we're told what to do. As college students will be away for the holidays, our help is especially needed. If you can help and for information, please contact **Mary Beth Seminario**, mbsem@comcast.net, 253-0894. THANK YOU!

UUSA COMMUNITY BREAKFAST NEEDS YOU!

The UUSA has been providing volunteers for the free Community Breakfast in the Willie Eaton Social Hall every Wednesday for three years. We serve 80-120 guests a freshly cooked hot meal of eggs, home fries, sausages, pastries, cereal, toast, juice and coffee or tea – all provided by Amherst's Craig's Doors. Our breakfast is important as the Amherst Survival Center, which is open other days, is closed on Wednesday.

Our breakfast team works closely with Craig's Doors, which helps people find ways to become empowered and improve the quality of their lives through the creation of safe, respectful shelter and housing.

We regularly experience a shortage of volunteers both in the summer and the church year. Dishwashers and cleanup crew are especially difficult positions to fill, but many other jobs are also available. Contact **Clare Bertrand** at clarebertrand@gmail.com. She will send you a weekly email reminder with a link where you can see what positions are available for each week. For more information contact Clare, or **Sophie Rogers**.



Talking Across the Political Divide: A conversation between former Democratic State Rep. Ellen Story and current Republican State Rep. Todd Smola will take place on **Tuesday, December 5 from 7:00 – 8:30 P.M.** at the Bangs Community Center, Amherst (Room 101). The conversation will be moderated by Dr. Steve Brown, Project for Amherst Area Civil Conversation (PAACC) organizer and local psychologist.

Political discourse in America is increasingly polarized. It's getting harder to have civil conversations with people who have differences in their political views. People find that both social and work relationships are fractured by the inability to talk across the political divide – and people of divergent political views doubt the ability of our elected officials to work together and find common ground. Can we learn something about bridging from our elected officials? This event will explore their experiences, processes, and methods for bridging differences and accomplishing the work of government.