

THE AMHERST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST NEWSLETTER

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Important Information

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NEWSLETTER

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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 consistent style. Thank you!

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Schedule of Services

Sunday, January 6, 10:30 A.M. – *Forgiving Ourselves*

The Rev. Cook

January is a popular “starting over” time. In our determination to renew our best intentions, the hardest first step is to be gentle with ourselves.

Sunday, January 13, 10:30 A.M. – *Kintsukori*

The Rev. Cook

There is a wonderful Japanese way of making broken things whole again while at the same time not hiding their past.

An intergenerational service

Sunday, January 20, 10:30 A.M. – *Resisting White Supremacy – What is in it for White People*

Ken Wagner

How can I live with courage and integrity when the culture provides unearned benefits to me in my identities as white, male, heterosexual, able-bodied and middle class? How do I navigate the moral ambiguity if I live with some dominant identities and some targeted identities? Is it possible to find spiritual wholeness when those with those advantaged identities have perpetrated so much pain and suffering? How does one navigate the denial and guilt that attaches to those identities in order to stand in solidarity with those targeted for oppression?

Explore these questions as Ken Wagner shares part of his journey in grappling with these questions. You may be surprised at the potential for spiritual wholeness and liberation on a very personal level.

Ken Wagner is former president of the Clara Barton District of the Unitarian Universalist Association. He currently serves on the UUA’s Nominating Committee and was one of the founding members of the New England Region’s Antiracism/Anti-oppression/Multicultural Transformation team called GRACE. He has also served for the last nine years on the Executive Steering Committee of the Allies for Racial Equity and just completed a two-year term as president of that organization.

Today is our Dedicated Offering Sunday.

Sunday, January 27, 10:30 A.M. – *These Three: Faith*

The Rev. Cook

Beginning a three-sermon series on the “theological virtues:” faith, hope and love.

Texts of sermons are available to members and friends of UUSA by request. Send email to:

office@uusocietyamherst.org

<p><i>Many older 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.</i></p>

Along the Way

I enjoy the imperative quality of winter. Love it or hate it, you cannot ignore it. Even if you travel south to escape it, it is winter that drives the decision. With all of the blandness of real power, winter simply occurs all over us. Intruding on a culture dedicated to convenience, winter is stupendously inconvenient. It takes us out of ourselves; does not allow the easy evasion of our humanity which summer sometimes gives us. The most graceful and athletic of us may slip and fall, the quickest of walkers be reduced to a hobble, the most work-driven overachievers forced into a day off.

Winter brings us to our senses. We become acutely aware of moving air when it comes straight out of Canada. Icy pavement makes us sensitive to every nuance of the earth we walk so carelessly with our summer stride. Light becomes a snow-gathered glitter which forces closed our eyes, while its palette is reduced: white, blue and black are the only colors of the winter woods. The world is structure and line, as if sketched in graphite.

Are you ever so acutely aware of heat and moisture as at the first step into a warm winter kitchen? Doesn't the skin on your cheeks open like a flower, your sense of smell return in a flood of aroma? Are you ever so luxuriantly relaxed as after a winter trek when everything you touch is warm? Does anything taste as good as food eaten around a warm table, the shrill light of the snow softened by windows, the air heard, not felt?

From a world of spare simplicity, we are returned to a world of textured richness; our senses, cleaned and renewed, are filled; our spirits, chastened and enlivened, are grateful.

The gift of winter is gratitude, gratitude for the simple gifts of warmth and food, gratitude for life, heart and spirit. May the season fill you with its gift.

See you in church,
Rev. Steve

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.

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.

Our **December Dedicated Offering** raised \$696 for **The Literacy Project**.

Our **January Dedicated Offering** will be for **Nueva Esperanza**.

Nueva Esperanza is a grass-roots, community-building agency in Holyoke, helping Puerto Rican families (including those displaced by Hurricane Maria) and Afro-Caribbean families succeed in their new homes in Western Massachusetts. Our offering on January 20 will be to help move forward their good work. They write:

MISSION: Nueva Esperanza exists to be a catalyst and partner for a vibrant, sustainable and powerful Puerto Rican/Afro-Caribbean community in Holyoke.

VISION: Nueva Esperanza's vision is to be a hub for community, creation, and culture for the Puerto Rican/Afro-Caribbean community.

- **Creation:** By creating new opportunities through social justice and community education focusing on leadership and creative youth development, we continue moving both the organization and the community forward.
- **Community:** Maintaining and expanding Nueva Esperanza's property assets will make us leaders by example in how members of the community can take ownership of their neighborhoods and get more involved within their communities.
- **Culture:** To strive to become a Puerto Rican/Afro- Caribbean Cultural Center that keeps our traditions, art, and history alive within our communities.

Notes from the President

As we move through the holidays toward the new year and the light returning to our days, I wanted to share a letter included in the Congregational Record for our potential new minister. You will find it below.

The Board is concentrating on Safer Congregation, the budget and canvass for 2019, and preparing for Candidating Week in April.

With hope, Karen

~ ~ ~

Thank you for visiting the Congregational Record for our settled minister search at the Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst Massachusetts.

Like so many wonderful UU congregations, our congregation embodies the goodness and depth of commitment Unitarian Universalists overall express in this beautiful, beloved, and troubled world. Members and friends are ready to meet the needs of others through participation in any number of vibrant committees and task forces including pastoral care, a community breakfast program, and social justice work—you name it, we are here for one another as caring humans and committed UUs. Our congregants also work on their personal faith journeys through music, religious education, and worship, and in communication with each other. We want to make a difference in the world and we are eager to have a faith leader to help us center, rejuvenate, and step back out into the world as spiritually grounded leaders for positive change.

Our three-year interim period has helped the congregation better understand and embrace diversity in leadership, worship, and outreach. Our interim period has also helped us better understand Unitarian Universalism's unique message, embracing ethos, and powerful impetus toward social change and spiritual wholeness. As a Board, the interim period has helped us better understand and implement strong systems while maintaining flexibility, communication on all levels including the ongoing financial needs of our growing congregation, and our responsibility for keeping the ship steady as we navigate change. Our Board also embraces a spiritual leadership that helps us remember always that we are doing the work we do in support of our beloved faith community.

Our congregation is eager to welcome a new, settled minister to help us work toward and realize the vision of a deep, powerful, outward-reaching and inward-nourishing ministry that will continue to amplify the message of Unitarian Universalism: to Learn, Love, Work, Give, Hope. We are eager to find a person who can help us be our best selves as Unitarian Universalists.

Our congregation has been central to the lives of so many people for so many years. The centrality of its meaning can be seen not only in the good work of the congregants, but also in the building itself. Located in the heart of downtown Amherst, we recently renovated and expanded our space—especially adding an industrial kitchen and hospitality area with our community breakfast outreach in mind. As we move into the future, our Sunday worship space is filled nearly to capacity and we hope to explore ways to widen our embrace of all who seek our inclusive message.

Western Massachusetts is a wonderful place to live. Whether you are in town, or in the surrounding hill towns, the communities that make up the greater Amherst area are filled with people who are interesting, interested, and committed to sustainable lifestyles and welcoming diversity. My family moved to Amherst eight years ago from Augusta, Maine, where we were part of a vibrant UU community. We were so happy to find this faith community surrounded by so many good people.

I hope you'll find our Congregational Record useful in considering opportunities for your own future. I wish you the very best in your own search.

In Faith,

Karen Fisk, President, UUSA Board of Trustees

Ministerial Search Committee

By the time you read this update, your Search committee may have essentially vanished from view. We hope to be awash in ministerial applications by then. We have to observe strict confidentiality from that point on. We will not be able to tell you who has applied or what we think about any of the applicants. Sometimes a minister applies to work for a new congregation without first alerting their current congregation. We must take care to preserve their confidentiality and to let them decide whether and when to be public about their job search.

In December, we finished the “Congregational Record” (CR), which is meant to provide a detailed picture of our Society to ministers who are looking for a new congregation. Reverend Steve and our UUA coach approved the CR and it was posted for ministers in search, right on schedule. One of those ministers may be reading it as I type!

We prepared for interviews, creating a form to help us evaluate records from potential ministers. We made lists of questions to use in two different kinds of interviews and two different kinds of reference checks.

We also completed the “packet,” which includes lots more information about our Society as well as Amherst and the surrounding towns. This packet includes samples of our newsletters, Order of Service, budget reports, letters from previous and current ministers and interim ministers, etc. We started with a fabulous website that last year’s Search Committee put together and updated it to fit the vision of the current Search Committee.

In January, ministers in search will tell the UUA if they are interested interviewing with us. We should be receiving a list of applicants in the beginning of January. After we know who is interested in our congregation, we will begin reading applications and listening to sermons. We will send our “packet” to interested ministers, and start conducting Skype interviews.

Here is a brief summary of our schedule after January:

- February: Begin weekend visits with applicants (officially called “pre-candidates”).
- March: Continue those weekend visits.
- Late March: We will send a ranked list of our pre-candidates to the UUA. We hope one of our top choices will also have chosen us. If so, that person will become our “candidate” and we will start arranging to have them visit with our congregation for a whole week in April.
- April 28 through May 5: Assuming we have a candidate, we will invite them to come here for Candidating Week. During this week, the congregation will be able to experience two services led by our candidate, meet them, and vote on whether or not to call them as our new settled minister. This week gives the whole congregation time to get to know the candidate and consider whether they would be a good fit as our new settled minister. It also provides the candidate with time to decide whether they want to serve as our minister, and whether they will feel at home in our Pioneer Valley.

Wish us luck! We will be very busy, very soon, doing our very best to find a minister for all of us.

Written by Louise, with help from the committee:

Carol Johnson, Charlie Atwood, Janis Gray, Kiana Diggs, Sue Kelly,

Jess Murphy and Louise Grosslein (co-chairs)

Fundraising



Stone Soup Bazaar once again graced our sanctuary and social hall with great cheer as people from the congregation and the greater community shopped for artisan goods. All visitors were greeted warmly at the door by a contingent that included many new-to-the-congregation members, which gave these folks an opportunity to meet others. The Stone Soup Café as always brimmed with great smells and happy workers who fed the crowds with soup and muffins.

The effort was a great combination of leadership from the Stone Soup Committee and many volunteers – both well-known and new to the congregation. The day grossed \$2,884 (Cafe \$495; Quilt \$599; Baskets \$690; Vendors \$1100), and cost approximately \$500 in donated goods from soup to basket contents.

The next fundraiser is the Spring Service Auction. We are all looking forward to that opportunity to be together!

Resisting White Supremacy Workshop Series

The “Dismantling White Supremacy” Task Force will be hosting a workshop series at the UU meetinghouse entitled “Resisting White Supremacy.” The workshop consists of eight two-hour sessions, one night a week. The focus is on allowing white people to understand the racial component of their identity, and how to live with authenticity and integrity as a white person in a society grounded in white supremacy. Although the workshop is free, a very important part of the workshop is that participants need to commit to the entire eight weeks, not just come to a session or two.

Ken Wagner, president of the UUA’s *Allies for Equity*, has facilitated these workshops at more than a dozen congregations and community groups across New England. He will be speaking at the Sunday Service on January 20. **The eight-session workshop begins Wednesday, January 30.** The two-hour sessions will begin at 7:00 P.M.

We want to provide this workshop to our congregation, AND if there is room, open it up to our neighboring UU congregations.

If you are interested in participating or have any questions, please contact **Susan Rice** or **Steve Rice** at 413-253-4485.

Music Notes



Musings from the Music Director: Our community is so blessed with much talent and appreciation for music. For that I am certainly grateful. It makes my position as your Music Director a very joyful and fulfilling one. I want to thank everyone for your support, engagement, and encouragement. It is an honor and a privilege to serve as your music director.

Our choir is quite extraordinary. For a relatively small group of core members, we manage to present music almost every week, and our members are required to learn their music on a pretty short turnaround! We only rehearse on Sunday mornings.

Even though we look crowded up there some of the time, we are always open to more members!! We of course particularly need tenors (doesn’t everyone?) of any gender. If you love to sing – ESPECIALLY IN THAT TENOR RANGE!! – please consider joining our fun and dedicated group.

And the next time you see a member of the choir, thank them for their hard work and the contribution they may provide to your experience at the UUSA!!! Many of our members not only serve on the choir, but in many other less visible capacities in the Society, as many of you do as well.

So thank you all for making the UUSA a place of community, energy, caring, and spirituality for all.

We will be doing another stellar Choir Sunday, this year (2019) on May 19. Content TBA!! Stay tuned, and thanks again for your enthusiasm for the music program here at the UUSA!

Brenda Miller
Music Director

Membership

We welcome **Linda B. Robinson** and **Rachel** and **Craig Gibson**, who signed our Membership Book on November 18, and **Ellen Leahy-Pile**, **Chris Pile** and **Clarise Patton**, who did the same on December 2! All six of these newest members live in Amherst.

Getting to Know UU

Are you new to us this year and curious about who we are? At noon on Sunday, February 17, come join **Rev. Steve**, Director of Religious Education **Rebecca Fricke** and folks from the Membership Committee downstairs in the Conference Room for a brief introduction to Unitarian Universalism and the UU Society of Amherst. Bring your questions with your snack and beverage from Social Hour! What are you looking for — and what might we have to offer?



Religious Education Ministry



Happy New Year!

We're halfway through our UUSA service schedule, which means we've done a lot and we still have a lot of learning, fun and worship to do. The elementary children will continue to learn and grow together through stories, mindfulness activities, art and games. In the preschool **Jacy** will work on helping the children build relationships with each other and an understanding of how we can learn together in our UU space.

I am excited to announce that we will be offering OWL for K-2 and 4-6th graders. OWL is a unique program that invites age appropriate discussions of sexuality within the context of Justice and Equity, Self Worth, Sexual Health, and Responsibility. The OWL activities dovetail with our seven Unitarian Universalist principles. You can read more about the curriculum here: <https://www.uua.org/re/owl>



Alyson Bull and **Susan Wells** will be leading the newly revised 4-6 curriculum (10 sessions) and **Lauren Croce** and **Tom Fricke** will be facilitating K-2 (six sessions). There will be a parent meeting on January 13 during the service in Classroom A. During the parent meeting we will go over the curriculum and answer questions. It is very important that parents and children commit to being at every session. If families have friends who would like to participate, they should contact me (dre@uusocietamherst.org).

Do you have talents you would like to share with the RE program? Please come talk to me and we can figure out when you can come share them with the children.

YoUUs,
Rebecca Fricke, DRE

SAFER CONGREGATIONS

Greetings from the Safer Congregations Task Force! We have been busy at work and wanted to update you about what we have been working on this year. As many of you know, several years ago our UUSA congregation approved a Safer Congregation Policy. These policies broadly cover a variety of safety issues, from supervision of children to protocols around dangerous situations and building security. We have done research around building safety and are assessing systems for changing locks and the installation of security cameras for the building. Additionally, we have taken up the task of creating an active shooter policy for the congregation. To this end, we have met with the Amherst Police Department and walked through our building together and will host the police to train us in A Citizen Response to Active Threats (ALICE) course in 2019. The course will be about 60-90 minutes and consist of a presentation and questions and answers related to why, as citizens, we should be preparing for an active threat, and then discuss different response options and offer basic strategies for achieving the best outcome with these responses.

Please join us on Sunday, January 27, 2019 at 12 Noon following the service for this training. As always, we are open to suggestions of additional safety issues you feel should be addressed.

Yours in Service,
Safe Congregation Task Force
Lisa Cyr, Casey Flueckiger, Rebecca Fricke, Rob Fuderich, and Lisa Harvey

Social Events

The Women's Lunch Group meets on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month at noon for spirited conversation over local, inexpensive cuisine. Our luncheon January 10 will be at Johnny's Tavern on Boltwood Walk, Amherst. We welcome every woman, whether she is new to our Society or a longer-time member or friend. It is not necessary to RSVP, but if you have questions or want to be on the e-notification list, contact **Sophie Rogers** at sophiesailing@gmail.com or 413-772-9814.

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.

Fiscal Dashboard

Through June 30, 2018

This Fiscal Dashboard is meant to give an overview of our financial health. Because it is only a snapshot, please feel free to speak with someone on the Finance Committee with any specific questions you may have. We hope to make this a periodic addition to the newsletter.

Operating Budget

	18-19 Budget	17-18 YTD actual	16-17 YTD Actual	15-16 YTD Actual
Total Income	234,247	214,821	217,656	200,589
Total Expenses	234,247	224,264	214,804	200,539
Difference	0	* -9,443	2,852	50

* We budgeted \$7,800 from our unrestricted reserves to offset this anticipated deficit but did not transfer that money because our cash flow was and continues to be good.

Income

	18-19 Budget	17-18 YTD actual	16-17 YTD Actual	15-16 YTD Actual
Pledge Income	** 171,820	152,779	143,124	135,296
Plate Income	8,400	9,774	9,144	8,327
Dedicated Offering Income	10,000	10,235	9,089	9,167
Rental Income	28,000	27,067	36,363	32,213
Fundraising	13,800	11,523	15,515	9,824

** This includes \$159,820 in regular pledges plus \$12,000 in 3 year declining Bridge the Gap pledges.

Assets (as of June 30 each year)

	6/30/2018	6/30/2017	6/30/2016	6/30/2015
Endowment	151,333	146,437	139,413	152,247
Restricted Funds	78,643	75,092	70,358	70,573
Unrestricted Reserve	24,829	24,806	34,777	36,168
*** Capital Expenses	6,609	8,670	13,882	18,441

***Our Capital Expenses fund is money left from our capital campaign to renovate and expand our building. At the end of 2017, its purpose was changed from specifically finishing the renovation to meeting any capital expenses.

Social Action



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. 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 questions or more information contact Clare, or **Sophie Rogers**, sophiesailing@gmail.com.

Just One Thing On the second Sunday of most months a collection for the Survival Center occurs at UUSA. A basket is placed in the foyer for these items. A notice appears in the announcements the week before about specific things needed. People from Amherst and 12 other towns benefit from our contributions.

During the past calendar year, our UU members and friends have generously given food, juice, diapers, feminine care products and oral care items. Thank you for your ongoing help in supporting our basket. For information contact **Mary Beth Seminario**, mbsem@comcast.net, 413-253-0894.

Our Caring Ministries



HAPPY, BLESSED NEW YEAR

To each and all!

As we initiate a new small group this month, focusing on sharing our experiences of aging, we offer the following profound contemplation by the classical composer Daniel Auber:

“Aging seems to be the
only available way to live
a long life.”

CHEERS! ENJOY! And a big thank you to **Anne Louise White** for organizing this new venture and to **Anne Perkins** for the idea!

Our Minister, Caring Circle and Pastoral Care Team are all available to help during difficult times.

Our Caring Circle coordinator is **Catharine Porter**. Please contact her or your own Caring Person for rides, food, and simple needs. Other Caring Circle members are **Linda Callahan, Carolyn Holstein, Gabriela Horvay, Mary Latham, Martha Nelson, Susan Rice, Lynn Sussman, Gordon Wyse** and **Naomi Yanis**.

Our Pastoral Care Team co-coordinators are **Pete Rogers** and **Mary Wyse**. Other members are **Rev. Elizabeth Alcaide, Charlie Atwood, Rev. Stephen Cook, Rob Fuderich, Mary Herman, Carol Johnson** and **Fran Plumer**. Please contact one of them for more complex or personal needs.

We send love and support to all those who are struggling with illness, bereavement, or difficulties of any kind in your lives or the lives of your loved ones.