

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:

Rev. Stephen Cook

413-253-2848 (office) or minister@uusocietyamherst.org

Contact for an appointment.

CONGREGATIONAL ADMINISTRATOR:

Lea Douville

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: Karen Fisk

rmack@umass.edu

Vice President: *To be chosen*

413-210-0960

karenmargaretfisk@gmail.com

Clerk: Lynne Latham

508-308-5877

latham.lynne.m@gmail.com

Treasurer: Peter Lacey

413-665-3198

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 consistent style. Thank you!

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Schedule of Services

February 3, 10:30 A.M. – *What Does Love Require of Us?*

Mary Herman, UU Affiliate Minister; Ethical Culture Clergy

It is said that the great project of the human condition is to learn how to love, love well, love fully. Join us as we explore what we actually mean by love and how we can find greater connection and meaning in our friendships and relationships.

Today is a Dedicated Offering Sunday.

February 10, 10:30 A.M. – *Love Is . . .*

We will not be sitting in the sanctuary because it is time to get up and move – you have your choice of worshiping through art, social service, music and conversation. This worship service is a great opportunity for you to get to know people of all ages. Please consider bringing personal care donations (travel-size toothpaste, soap, combs, shampoo, etc.) to the service.

An intergenerational service

February 17, 10:30 A.M. – *These Three: Hope*

The Rev. Cook

The second of a sermon series on the “theological virtues,” Faith, Hope and Love.

(The first of our series was cancelled due to weather-related rescheduling.)

Today is our regularly scheduled Dedicated Offering Sunday.

February 24, 10:30 A.M. – *Beginning Again*

The Rev. Cook

As part of last month’s sermon, “Forgiving Ourselves,” we shared a “Litany of Atonement” from our hymnal that invited us to “Forgive ourselves and each other, and begin again in love.” How might Unitarian Universalists understand that?

Texts of sermons are available to members and friends of UUSA by request. Send email to office@uussocietyamherst.org



Selecting, arranging, and providing the flowers or other creative arrangements on our Chalice Table can be a deeply important spiritual practice and offering. If there is a special occasion, memory, or person that you would like to honor by offering flowers one Sunday, please sign up on Doodle at <https://doodle.com/poll/65a6spgeb6v83g3a>.

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.

Along the Way

From time to time I have used, for closing words, the following poem by the contemporary American poet, Thomas R. Smith:

Trust

It’s like so many other things in life

to which you must say no or yes.

So you take your car to the new mechanic.

Sometimes the best thing to do is trust.

The package left with the disreputable-looking

clerk, the check gulped by the night deposit,

clerk, the check gulped by the night deposit,
the envelope passed by dozens of strangers—
all show up at their intended destinations.

The theft that could have happened doesn't.
Wind finally gets where it was going
through the snowy trees, and the river, even
when frozen, arrives at the right place.

And sometimes you sense how faithfully your life
is delivered, even though you can't read the address.

This kind of challenge to our hearts and courage is always before us in our personal lives and in our institutions, but in this period of transition for UUSA, both the challenges and the promises of trust are heightened. Following the huge effort of transforming your building with the addition of the Willie Eaton Social Hall and the retirement of the Rev. Alison Wohler, you trusted your leaders to choose for you a “temporary shepherd” (as interim ministers are sometimes poetically called), to serve you in a time of transition. The two years of the Rev. Cindy Frado's leadership were a fine beginning of that transition. Unfortunately (as sometimes happens), despite excellent work and due diligence, your search for a new minister was incomplete. Since September you have trusted me, another temporary shepherd, to work with another search committee while providing you with ministerial leadership different in some ways from what you've known. You are aware that there are important questions before the Society and you have trusted your leaders and me, but most of all you've trusted yourselves, to face those questions and explore the answers.

Soon, you will be invited by your leaders to manifest that trust and faith in the future by responding, as best as each of you will determine and choose, to the challenge of providing the funds needed to conduct the Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst into the future, as this parish has done, year by year, since 1887. This, too, is a part of the religious life; it involves not just the dimensions of personal faith and spirit, but the dimension of maintaining the building and keeping the lights on, the dimension of paying the minister and staff who will continue to provide the music, education and inspiration that are the life of congregational worship and fellowship, not only for those who are now here but for all who may enter your doors in the years ahead. As I sometimes say on Sunday in inviting your gifts, “It is for us to keep faith with our children and with the others who will someday speak of those who came before.” I urge your careful and generous consideration of that invitation.

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 scheduled **January Dedicated Offering for Nueva Esperanza has been moved to February 3** due to the cancellation of our January 20 service due to snow.

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.

Our regularly scheduled Dedicated Offering on February 17 will be for the Treehouse Foundation in Easthampton.

It takes a village to raise a child; the Treehouse Community is one of those villages. One woman, Judy Ocker-ton, had the idea of providing a home for children and youth involved in the foster care system where the community helped support these children and their families. She knew that children who have experienced foster care have experienced great trauma in their lives and needed to live in a larger supportive community. She helped develop Treehouse and is still the Executive Director. The purpose of Treehouse is to improve the life outcome of these children. It is a loving community where families adopting children from foster care live next door to elders. These are elders who have chosen to live in this intentional community where elders help provide the hands-on care children need. Whether it's holding a baby, helping with homework, teaching a youth to play a musical instrument, leading an outdoor play group, the "elders" are involved. A community room is the site of many birthday parties, group songfests, games and celebrations.

There are 12 family homes and 48 elder cottages. Since its beginning in 2006, more than 102 children have lived in the community with 125 older adult "grandparents." Social workers are on site to help with problems that arise. Babies who have become teenagers shovel snow for elders or carry their groceries. There have been 24 high school and four college graduates. It is a vibrant community where people know one another and interact every day. Children thrive in this nurturing environment where they know they belong.

Message from the President

Hello friends,

As we greet our new year the Board is occupied with our next budget and preparations for the canvass. Our treasurer, **Peter Lacey**, reached out to the committee chairs to find out what their budget needs might be for next year, incorporating those needs into the draft budget. We will post all information as soon as possible so that all Congregation members and friends will be aware of our financial hopes.

The Council of Chairs met in January with **Rev. Steve** leading a discussion of how this Council can function as a way for all committees to stay aware of schedules, needs, news. One objective for the Council of Chairs is to take care of issues that need not go to the Board in order to keep the Board functions focused on policy and visioning for the Congregation.

One vision the Board has is of a leadership succession model that continues to pull in and nurture new leadership—allowing our Congregation to flourish with shared commitment to the good health and vitality of the Congregation.

Here is an overview of what leadership succession might look like:

Leadership Succession would be a transition mechanism to bring new individuals to head congregational committees. The process used by the Religious Education Committee was cited as one approach that may work for some other committees. New members know the length of their term of service, participate in setting committee goals/objectives, work to set a budget, and engage in a "retreat" or other community-building experience. This model may not be applicable to all groups, but some variation of this model might be employed.

This could benefit the congregation in several ways:

- Members wouldn't feel obliged to continue as committee heads *ad infinitum*.
- Opportunities for other members to take on a leadership role would be opened.
- A larger number of members with experience at the head of a group could provide a better pool of candidates for other congregational leadership positions.
- The church's Leadership Team, made up of previous board presidents—**Joe Flueckiger**, **Tom Fricke**, and **Bo Mack**—has traditionally had responsibility for identifying prospective candidates for leadership positions. This team's work could be made easier and the congregation might be better served if committee leadership were broadened and more members took on leadership roles.

Yours in faith, Karen



Religious Education Ministry

I am excited to announce that we will be holding OWL programs 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 UU 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). It is very important that parents and children commit to being at almost every session.

Jacy Armenti and **Anna** and **Tessa Stanforth** are busy with a room full of babies, toddlers and preschoolers. Jacy's preschool program is essential for helping the children become good UUs. Jacy and the children practice circle time, listening, sharing, caring, and singing. Exactly what the adults practice in worship in larger chairs in the sanctuary!

Please come to our **Break Out Service** on **February 10**. We are collecting hygiene products such as travel-sized soap, toothbrushes, etc., to sort as part of our worship through service. See the poster included in this newsletter for full details.

YoUUs,

Rebecca Fricke

Director of Religious Education



Music Notes

We are pleased to announce a new member to the already awesome bass section of our choir. **Abe Gelbein** is a recent transfer Unitarian Universalist from other parts, and he is a wonderful addition. We thank him and welcome him to the choir!

If anyone else is interested (hello TENORS!) in joining our fantastic group, just come on by at 8:45 A.M. on just about any given Sunday morning for rehearsal in the sanctuary. Do contact me before coming so I can put you on the email list, and inform you of any off weeks. If you have been a member and have been away from the group for a while, that's totally okay – and please feel free to re-join whenever you can!!

Preliminary reports for the annual CHOIR SUNDAY are just in! The date is MAY 19, and I hear that the choir will be presenting a flurry of mad mad madrigals from around the world!! Stay tuned for more information and if you want to participate, start coming to rehearsals soon as we will be working on the music bit by bit, week by week.

Yours in music,

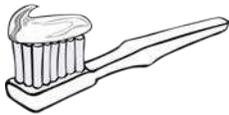
Brenda Miller

Music Director

UUSA Personal Care Collection for Craig's Doors

January 27 – February 10

From **January 27– February 10th** the UUSA will be collecting travel-sized personal care items for Craig's Doors, Amherst's homeless shelter. Donations will be accepted before and after the services and during the week between 10-2 in the office. The collection will culminate with a whole-congregation **Valentine's Service** on **February 10th**.



Suggested Donations:

Soap

Shampoo

Toothpaste

Toothbrushes

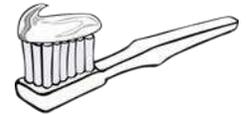
Tissue Packets

Deodorants

Small combs

Feminine Hygiene Products

New socks



For more information please contact:

Rebecca Fricke, DRE

413-687-8722 or dre@uusocietyamherst.org

Ministerial Search Committee

Your Ministerial Search committee is working hard these days. We have read Ministerial Records, listened to a multitude of sermons, and done Skype interviews. We have also had many discussions about the ministers who expressed interest in our congregation, choosing the strongest applicants for our pre-candidating weekends. We will be inviting three or four pre-candidates to come visit for a weekend in February and March. During each of those weekends we will host a minister from Friday night until Sunday afternoon, interviewing them, answering their questions, and basically getting to know each other. We will travel with them to a neutral pulpit and listen to them deliver a sermon. We will do our best to honor the suggestions and opinions you offered in the congregational survey and the cottage meetings as we continue to consider which minister might best serve our congregation.

As a reminder, 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: 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.

Please feel free to ask us questions about the process but not about the applicants themselves, as we continue to honor the confidentiality of the ministers. Thank you for trusting us to do this work for all of us.

Carol Johnson, Charlie Atwood, Janis Gray, Kiana Diggs, Sue Kelly,
Jess Murphy and Louise Grosslein (co-chairs)

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 27. **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.

Fundraising



Save the Date!!!! Saturday evening, May 18! Our well-attended and famous Service Auction!!

It's time to think about your talents and gifts (and don't you dare say you have none!). These are the things/experiences that we share with others in our UU community.

Our auction is a major community builder and fundraiser. It provides us with opportunities to deepen our relationships with each other while bringing much needed funds to our coffers.

Look forward to regular updates in the weeks to come about this not-to-be missed social and entertainment event of the year.

Membership

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?

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.

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 February 14 will be at The Taste: Thai Cuisine at 25 North Pleasant Street, 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 notification list, contact **Janis Gray** at jsgray@crocker.com or 413-259-1584.

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.

Green Sanctuary

Save the Date: April 7

Earth Day service and afternoon workshop with Reverend Fred Small, UU minister, singer-songwriter, and environmental activist. More information will follow.

Social Action



Just One Thing On February 11, the second Sunday of the month, a basket will be placed in the foyer for donations to Craig's Doors. Just One Thing usually benefits the Amherst Survival Center, but this time it will supplement our Religious Education program's personal hygiene campaign. Items being requested include soap, deodorant, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrushes, diapers and feminine hygiene items. Anything that you can contribute is most appreciated. For information contact **Mary Beth Seminario**, mbsem@comcast.net

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.

ION CORNER

ION (Interfaith Opportunity Network) is very pleased to welcome new representatives from the New England Peace Pagoda, Amherst College through the Cadigan Center for Religious & Spiritual Life, and Mount Holyoke College through the Office of Religious & Spiritual Life. For additional information contact **Mary Beth Seminario**, our UUSA representative to ION.

Our Caring Ministries



Joy

Here's the thing about joy. We don't often take it seriously.

Yet when we feel joy, we feel safe, we feel free, we feel loved—and that is the condition that we as Unitarian Universalists want for everyone.

In these times of change, disruption, and uncertainty, there is a natural tendency for people to become fearful and disillusioned. It is precisely in these times that we need more leadership, more possibility, more love—more joy.

These times call for all of us as UUs to recover our prophetic zeal and great historic mission to nurture the possibility and the practice of Beloved Community.

The Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray

President, Unitarian Universalist Assn.

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, and a surge of happiness and joy, at least now and then!