

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

March 3, 10:30 A.M. – *The Future is Now*

The Rev. Cook

As a self-governing congregation we have the freedom to chart our own path—and the responsibility to fund it.

March 10, 10:30 A.M. – *Swiss Army Minister*

The Rev. Cook

Churches in search of a new minister have a simple goal—find one who can do absolutely everything!

March 17, 10:30 A.M. – *Youth Sunday*

Come and participate in a worship led by our UU youth, many of whom have been in the RE program since they were babies! This is a whole-congregation service. Babies, toddlers and preschoolers will start upstairs with **Jacy**, **Anna** and **Tess** and be sung downstairs after the preschool sings a song. Please come and support our young adults.

Today is our Dedicated Offering Sunday.

March 24, 10:30 A.M. – *Sixty Percent*

The Rev. Cook

With our Wednesday morning community breakfast, UUSA does a great job of providing a meal for many who are homeless. However, sixty percent of the food aid distributed in Massachusetts goes to people who are employed and have a permanent address.

March 31, 10:30 A.M. – *Holy Foolishness*

The Rev. Cook

Holy fools trouble our comfortable systems because in the disorder they bring are hidden important and challenging questions.

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.

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

Along the Way

I know that not all of us are members of “Red Sox Nation,” as the dedicated followers of the Red Sox have named themselves, nor for that matter, baseball fans of any description. Many are those who pay no attention whatsoever to the day in February when “pitchers and catchers report” that marks the beginning of baseball’s spring training season. (True fans, meanwhile, will have circled this day on their calendars with the kind of reverence and zeal reserved by the pious for the holy days of their religion.)

However, neither the casual fan nor the non-fan is likely to escape the general cultural attention paid to the sport, particularly as it has been hailed for years as our annual harbinger of hope that even now, in winter’s sullen

depths, we take heart in knowing there are warmer days ahead. Soon the boys and girls of summer, from youngest tots to grizzled pros, will be taking to parks and fields in our great summer sport; millions will follow them via radio, TV and in the stands. In humble local parks and multi-million-dollar stadia the faithful will gather in hallowed spaces to engage in time-honored rituals like the “Seventh Inning Stretch.” They will share familiar music, chants and songs; most of all, they will give their hearts to the players and the game, ready to share in true fellowship of either agony or ecstasy. However, over time, their dedication can surge or fall away depending on the success of the team. They might stop attending.

More than one commentator has noted a similarity between “sport dedication” and “religious dedication.” A classic newsletter column has circulated for years among churches and ministers of all denominations that humorously compares the two. I offer it here in the spirit of fun at the beginning of spring training.

Why People Stop Going to Baseball Games

- * No one sent me a personal invitation to attend the game.
- * Every time I went to a game, they asked me for money.
- * The people around me in the stands didn’t seem very friendly.
- * The umpire made some decisions with which I didn’t agree.
- * Some games went into extra innings and I was late getting home.
- * They always played games on weekends, the only time I have to rest.
- * The seats were uncomfortable.
- * The ballpark organist played tunes I didn’t know.
- * My parents made me go to games when I was little.
- * I recently read a book about baseball and I feel I know as much as the players and the manager anyway.
- * I don’t feel I should make my children attend baseball games. When they are old enough they can decide for themselves which team they want to support.

Play ball!

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 **January Dedicated Offering** for **Nueva Esperanza** (moved to February 3 due to cancellation of the service due to weather) raised \$610.

Our **February Dedicated Offering** for **The Treehouse Foundation in Easthampton** raised \$763.53.

The Dedicated Offering on March 17 will be for DIAL/SELF. DIAL/SELF is a community-based non-profit agency that has been serving the youth and communities of Western MA since 1977. It provides a wide array of services that foster youth empowerment and community service. Over the course of the last four decades, more than 40,000 area youth have been served by the agency in Franklin, Hampshire and Hampden Counties and the North Quabbin region. Its mission is to help young people become independent by connecting them with housing, employment, education and civic opportunities. Services and opportunities include drop-in sites, street outreach, help with basic needs like food, hygiene, help navigating educational and work goals, and help with housing, such as emergency shelter, family reunification, kinship housing, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing.

DIAL/SELF has case managers and outreach staff that are available in Franklin and Hampshire County, and DS AmeriCorps members each year also serve at schools and agencies in Hampden County.

It is currently fundraising to continue construction on its Northampton Teen Housing location in Northampton MA, located near Smith Vocational High School. This location is conveniently located near an urgent care facility, a bus route, and multiple schools. The building (shown in an architect's rendition, below) will be adjacent to DIAL/SELF's recently renovated four-bedroom / two-apartment building.



This additional building will consist of four single-bedroom efficiency units, as well as a program space for staff to work with youth. The primary goal for this building is to expand the housing options for homeless and at-risk youth in Hampshire County. The apartments will be fully furnished with three-month auto-renewing leases, and rent will be based on what the youth are able to afford. These three-month auto-renewing leases will provide youth with greater flexibility than a traditional one year lease.

For more information visit <http://www.dialself.org/NorthamptonTeenHousingProject.html>

Message from the President

March 2019

Hello friends,

The Board has embraced the idea of Task Forces—small teams convened for a short time to address specific issues or challenges. Unlike a committee, these task forces have finite goals, although a committee or ongoing initiative might grow from their work together.

Currently, in addition to our awesome Ministerial Search Task Force, the Board has convened three task forces

- The Pledge Drive Task Force—comprised of **Jeanne Ballantine, Susan Rice, Peter Lacey, Dave Huber, Susanne Personette, and Rachel Peterson**, with help from **Lynne Latham**;
- The Safer Congregation Task Force—comprised of **Lisa Cyr, Casey Flueckiger, Rob Fuderich, and Rebecca Fricke**;
- and The Outreach, Integration, and Retention Task Force—comprised of **Catharine Porter, Jeanne Ballantine, Pat Rector, and Rebecca Fricke**.

(Please forgive me if I left any names out)

The Pledge Drive Task Force will bring forward the message and materials for our annual canvass, which will launch with a special worship service March 3. Our hopes and goals are no less than sustaining this beloved community which serves not only those who gather on Sundays, but also an ever widening circle of people who

are discovering the transformational message of Unitarian Universalism—a faith that supports the idea that we need not think alike to love alike: a message of common humanity in this much divided nation.

The Safer Congregation Task Force, which has been convened before in order to create and update our Safer Congregation Handbook, is specifically looking at how to update our procedures to include active shooter precautions and to secure our building by changing our keys and creating a system for regularly changing our entry code. This is hard work. Contemplating Safer Congregation policies means imagining terrible scenarios in order to help prevent them. We are so grateful to this capable team for helping to keep us all safe—and the Board is grateful to the entire Congregation for staying aware of our policies and helping, always, to protect each other.

The Outreach, Integration, and Retention Task Force grew out of two separate letters sent to the Board containing observations about how to make new members feel more welcome—which of course meant we were not doing the best job at that task, a very important fact to know so that we can work to fix it! The Task Force has grown to embrace not only welcoming new members but also integrating those wonderful new people into the workings of the Congregation and helping all members and friends stay here with us. The “outreach” part of their title refers to efforts to employ adult programming as a tool that not only serves our own members but recruits the attention and involvement of those in the larger community.

This task force defined “retention” as the need for the UUSA to pay deep attention to the lives of our members in ways that are so meaningful that people will want to remain as part of this vibrant, evolving community. Of course that is what we are doing every day through our various ministries from the extensive pastoral care we share with our congregation and larger community, to the mitigation of climate change through our green sanctuary initiative, to expanding our understanding of the pervasiveness of white supremacy through education and discussion. And yet, we can always do more.

Each of these task forces allows us to delve deeper into specific goals, and each is working in concert with committees such as the Finance Committee, the Pastoral Care Committee, and the Membership Committee. Each of these committees along with others help sustain the consistent good work of our congregation. Without them, we could not thrive as we do.

The Board is grateful to the good work of our Congregation through committee work, task force challenges, showing up on Sunday to worship together, and simply (or complexly) embodying and enacting our Unitarian Universalist faith every day with every being we encounter.

Yours in faith,

Karen Fisk



Ministerial Search Committee

We have started our pre-candidating weekends. We had a minister here from Friday night until Sunday afternoon in February, and we will host two more ministers in March.

As a reminder, here is a brief summary of our schedule after February:

- March: Continue weekend visits with applicants (officially called “pre-candidates”).
- 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/May.
- **SAVE THE DATES! April 27 through May 5:** Assuming we are fortunate enough to find a match for our congregation, 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 do save time in your calendars during that week, especially on **two Sundays: April 28 and May 5**. On April 28 the candidate would lead the Sunday service, and you would have a chance to meet them during lunch. On May 5, the candidate would lead the Sunday service and then we would have a congregational meeting and vote on whether to call the minister. There will be other times for some committees, staff and congregants (members and friends) to meet the candidate during the week, too.

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)

Canvass

IT'S ANNUAL CANVASS TIME! Winter greetings from the Pledge Drive Task Force. UUSA has grown in wonderfully challenging and successful ways over the past several years. Heading into Spring 2019, we move into the next exciting phase of our congregational life as we call a new settled minister to help us grow into our future vision.

In March, the annual UUSA Canvass kicks off to assist friends and members in pledging their continuing financial support for the good work of our Society. Our combined pledges are critical to our success, as they fund nearly two-thirds of UUSA's annual operating budget. One goal of this year's Canvass is to provide a compensation package for our new minister and current staff in keeping with our future vision of UUSA.

Over the month of March, you'll be hearing more about UUSA's vision for 2019 and what each of us can do to make that vision a reality. For example, we are planning a lovely Canvass luncheon for all members, friends, and kids on March 24 that you won't want to miss – so *save that date!* Please watch for more information every week about other Canvass events, goals, and pledging opportunities in the announcements.

With gratitude, your Pledge Drive Task Force: Jeanne Ballantine, David Huber, Peter Lacey, Susanne Personette, Rachel Peterson, Susan Rice

Religious Education Ministry



The RE program is going strong!

- We should all be thankful for **Jacy's** strong preschool program because we are seeing some very happy little ones joining on a regular basis.
- Our elementary program has a consistent crowd, and beginning in January and running through to April, we are offering the UU sexuality curriculum called Our Whole Lives (OWL). Thanks to **Alyson Bull** and **Susan Wells** (4th-6th) and **Lauren Croce** and **Tom Fricke** (K-2) for facilitating the groups.
- Our 6th, 7th and 8th grade Sanctuary Keepers continue to help set up and implement one worship service a month for our congregation. The group also meets a second time to discuss UUism and their place in the faith.

- This month High School Youth Group is leading a service on March 17th. Please come and support their dedication to our congregation.

Want to share a talent and or your time? Think about volunteering for the RE Program!

YoUUrS,

Rebecca Fricke

Director of Religious Education

Music Notes



We had a nice little break in the choir from singing in service for two weeks in a row (unheard of!) in February. Thanks for the time off on the 17th and thanks to **Carolyn Holstein** for taking the steering wheel for the day. Like old times!!

February 10 saw a different choir, as we celebrated the “Love is...” breakout service with “All You Need is Love.” Thanks to all who chose to worship through music with us, and special thanks to **Maura Whalen** for her quick wit in nailing the end of the song with our version of the ending of the song: “We Love UU, Yeah Yeah” . . . indeed.

March and April are going to find the UUSA choir very busily learning a lot of music for the annual Choir Sunday, to be held this year on Sunday, May 19. It will feature some madrigals and other music from many corners of the world and many different time periods.

Thanks for all of your support for the music at UUSA!

Yours in music,

Brenda Miller

Music Director

Welcoming Congregation Renewal

It has been nearly 30 years since our denomination initiated the Welcoming Congregation program, supporting outreach and support to LGBTQ+ members and their community. Since 1990, more than 800 UU congregations (about 77%) have earned designation as Welcoming Congregations. The UUA conceived of this program as a way for congregations to live more fully into our denomination’s values and principles.

A great deal has happened in 30 years and there are opportunities to re-visit, re-ignite and deepen our inclusive culture. In 2015, the UUA unveiled its Welcoming Congregation Renewal Program, stating, “to honor your original pledge, it’s essential that new people in the congregation understand your congregation’s commitment to this work...and learn about the current needs and concerns of the LGBTQ+ people.” A serious renewal extends to transgender, non-binary individuals as well, and their families.

So far, 18 of our 800 Welcoming Congregations (.02 percent) have formally renewed their welcome, although that it is possible that more are in process of fulfilling the serious but achievable benchmarks, which require specific activities annually in worship, days of observance, education, and projects.

Let’s Warm Up Our Welcome in 2019: On February 10, a few of us met to explore what it would mean for UUSA to begin the “Five Practices of Welcoming Congregation Renewal,” which is a thoughtful program of benchmarks that helps us deepen and expand our culture of inclusion. Join our Welcoming Congregation Renewal committee by emailing **Pat Rector** pat.rector@gmail.com or calling her at (360) 932-4960. You do not need to identify as LGBTQ+/TGQNB to join, but let’s also be sure to honor the spirit of “Nothing About Us Without Us.”

Fundraising



Mark Your Calendars!!! May 18th...Talents and Treasures Service Auction

By the time you read this, you will have already received lots of information about our most important fundraiser of the year...our “Talents and Treasures” Service Auction!!

The offerings that all of us provide are generous ways that we give of ourselves in deepening the connections within this shared spiritual community, whether it’s cleaning someone’s gutters or offering a gala event in your home.

We are hoping *everyone and all of us* will be a part of this **fun and purposeful event**.

A focus of this year's auction is to provide offerings that appeal to **families with young children**. And to honor that focus, there will be a children's party downstairs with some very special activities during the auction.

Because this is our most important fundraiser, it's important that we all participate by offering a service, a talent or a treasure. If you are struggling with figuring out what you will offer, please talk with one of the members of this year's Auction Task Force. Stop by the Auction Table in the social hall during coffee hour, or give one of us a call.

Donation forms are due April 7. You can pick up blank ones and turn in the filled out forms in the lobby of the meetinghouse.

Mary Herman, Lisa Cyr, Carolyn Cave, Fran Plumer, Susan Rice, Rachel Peterson and Polly Peterson

April 6 Meetinghouse Clean Up

Everyone in the congregation is invited to help make our meetinghouse sparkling clean again. Please put April 6 on your calendar now. We will work from 10:00 A.M. to approximately 2:00 P.M. We will dust and wash and vacuum and have lots of fun doing it together.

The Meetinghouse Committee members have been doing lots of little tasks that you may not be aware of. **Tom Fricke** recently changed many of the special batteries in the emergency lights and the emergency exit signs. And he is taking the old batteries to the landfill. He also disposed of the cellulose-laden Christmas tree (see Green Sanctuary column to understand why!). **Ron Grosslein** has taken the very compromised wooden table from the social hall to his home to repair it. He has also sanded, touched up, and painted the holes in the old hallway where cellulose was sprayed. **Jim Lee** has priced out window shades for Classroom A and a new Eagle pulpit podium, which he plans to build once the money is forthcoming.

Anne Perkins

Meetinghouse Committee Chair

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 March 14 will be at a location to be determined on February 28 – watch your weekly announcements for updates. 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 **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

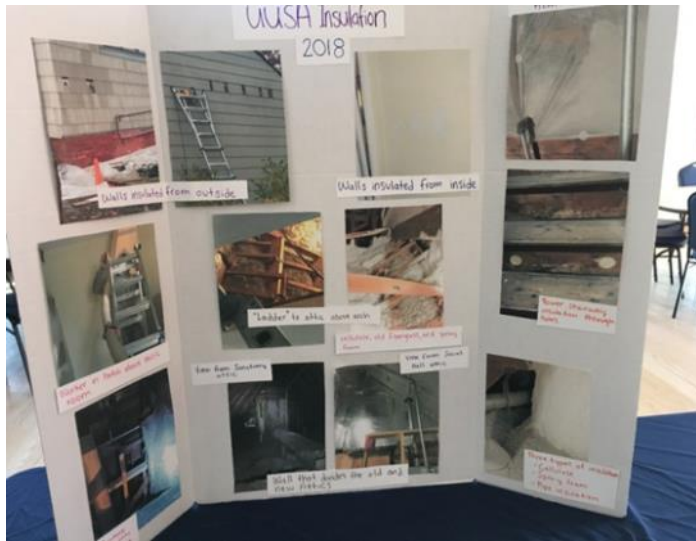
Update on Greening the UUSA Meetinghouse

Anne Perkins, Green Sanctuary Committee member

Last September I wrote about the proposed "insulation excitement" for the UUSA Meetinghouse. The work has now been done! The company Energia spent many hours spraying cellulose and foam in the sanctuary attic as well as installing foil-faced rigid isocyanurate board in various locations. They also sealed with caulk everywhere that was needed.

There were a few surprises along the way. There is a small closet next to the elevator that, unbeknownst to any of us, had not had a ceiling installed at the time of the new construction. As the insulators sprayed cellulose over the arch in the attic, a whole lot of it came down on the Christmas tree and Fundraising Committee items stored in it! The Green Sanctuary Committee hired **Casey Attebery** to build a new ceiling, Energia came back and sprayed cellulose above it, and we now have a very clean, neat closet. And a new Christmas tree that **David Ulen** found for us!

Other items are still being worked on to make our building more energy efficient and less expensive to heat and cool. Look for another update soon. And come see our display (below) at Social Hour, with lettering by **Ally Brau**.



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



Not Bread Alone On Saturday, March 30, eight UUs are needed to provide a noontime meal. It's a great way to meet new people, provide great food and have fun. No experience is needed as we work under an experienced kitchen leader. We work in shifts: Cooking 9:30 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.; serving 11:45 A.M. - @ 1:30 P.M.; cleanup 12 - @ 2:30 P.M. Not Bread Alone is located in the lower rear of First Congregational Church with access off Spring St. If you'd like to help or for information, please contact **Mary Beth Seminario**, 253-0904; mbsem@comcast.net.

Just One Thing On March 10, the second Sunday of the month, a collection for the **Amherst Survival Center** occurs. A basket is placed in the foyer for these items. As food prices continue to rise and people are forced to choose between heat and food, our help is needed even more. Two weeks before, the foods that are needed are detailed in the weekly announcements. Thank you for your continued support of our neighbors in need. For information contact **Mary Beth Seminario**, mbsem@comcast.net or 253-0894.

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.

Our Caring Ministries



"You and I, too, are fundamentally good. We are turned to the key of goodness. This is not to deny evil; it is to face evil squarely. And we can face evil squarely because we know that evil will not have the last word.

"Evil cannot have the last word because we are programmed—no, hard-wired—for goodness. Yes, goodness can be enlightened self-interest. Kindness builds goodwill. Generosity invites reciprocation. But even if there were absolutely no material benefit to being kind, you can't counterfeit the warm glow that you have inside when you have been kind. You just can't! That glow is something you relish because that's how we've been created. To be hateful and mean is operating against the deepest yearnings that God placed in our hearts. Goodness is not just our impulse. It is our essence."

"Made for Goodness" by Desmond Tutu; Mpho Tutu (daughter)

A reading from Rev. Steve's New Year's sermon 1-6-19, *Forgiving Ourselves*

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 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. Know that you do not walk your path alone.

A message to our beloved UUSA congregation

I have tried, so many times, to share during our Time for Sharing, but it just can't work for me. My sadness is too huge and I would surely fall apart. So, I've decided to write to you via our newsletter.

My gratitude and thanks to this UUSA family of mine and **George's** is immeasurable. The support and love so many have given me is more important than one might imagine.

I know that so many of you contributed, in so many ways, to the beautiful memorial service for George in November: **Alison Wohler, Rev. Stephen Cook,** the arrangement of the sanctuary and social room, the audio, the tape, **Brenda Miller,** the dear choir, the **Men's Breakfast** folks, the **Caring Circle,** the **Pastoral Care Team,** and all who contributed to make the reception with food and flowers and probably more than I will know.

Also to those, so many, who continue to care as I travel this journey, including so many guests at the Wednesday breakfast who have offered kind thoughts.

This place, our UUSA, I cherish and hold dear to my heart always.

With love,
Fran Plumer