

THE AMHERST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST NEWSLETTER

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

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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 to
jsgray@crocker.com.

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, February 2, 10:30 A.M. – *Searching for Homes*

Kevin J. Noonan

Kevin J. Noonan, a member of UUSA since 1991, will share snapshots of his journey alongside people who have no homes as well as those who have been displaced from their own countries.

Kevin is the currently the Executive Director of Craig's Doors — A Home Association, Inc., an agency he helped to establish in 2011. Craig's Doors operates a seasonal emergency shelter and co-sponsors the Wednesday Community Meals Program which is lovingly hosted by the UUSA.

Sunday, February 9, 10:30 A.M. – *Packing Love and a Whole Lot More*

Rebecca Fricke, DRE, and the RE Ministry

During this Whole-Congregation Breakout Service we will work in small groups to fill backpacks for women getting out of prison. Besides supplies like journals, toiletries, food, clothing and gift cards, individuals will be encouraged to share inspirational thoughts and quotes. Singing will be encouraged. Come worship through social action and at the same time get to know people of all ages.

Sunday, February 16, 10:30 A.M. – *There is a Love*

The Rev. Rachael Hayes

We take some time to remember that we are all loved and called to love.

Today is our Dedicated Offering Sunday.

Sunday, February 23, 10:30 A.M. – *Conscience and Democracy*

The Rev. Rachael Hayes

The fifth principle of Unitarian Universalism is “the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.” What does that actually look like, where can we find these values enacted in our congregation and in larger Unitarian Universalism, and how are we called to live this principle?

After the service, there will be an opportunity to sign the Membership Book for those who wish to join our UU Society today.

Texts of some sermons are available to members and friends of UUSA by request. Send email to office@uusocietyamherst.org Many older sermons and readings are posted on www.uusocietyamherst.org. Click on the “SERMON ARCHIVE” button on the right side of the home page.

How Shall We Grow?

The Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst is enjoying growth — more people are finding our community of faith a place where they want to belong. This is a wonderful opportunity to continue to spread the hopeful faith of Unitarian Universalism.

Because our sanctuary is often more than 80% full, we need to look at ways to expand our capacity or risk losing those who have found our community a solace and an energizing force in their lives.

The Board of Trustees asks for your thoughts as you fill out a survey to help assess the way forward. Hard copies of the survey in envelopes are available in the foyer starting Sunday, February 2 — and they can be returned to the foyer in subsequent weeks. The deadline is Sunday, March 1. For those who would like to submit the survey online, the link can be found here: <https://forms.gle/sGTv3ymSj6SDWGVv5>

Yours in Faith, The UUSA Board of Trustees (Karen, Susan, Joe, Casey, Ben, Emily, Peter, Rob, Rosie, and Jeanne)

Notes from our Congregational Conversation in December

Thank you to all who were able to participate in our **first Congregational Conversation on December 15** to acknowledge the growth of our congregation and how we can accommodate this growth into the future. The five small discussion groups addressed how we *currently* achieve our mission and how we might do *better* going forward. Click [here](http://bit.ly/2O92qwm) for detailed notes: <http://bit.ly/2O92qwm> (and with thanks to **Rosie Cowell** for collecting and submitting them). Please save the date: Our second Congregational Conversation is scheduled for **March 22**.

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. Remember that no one is required to contribute to our Dedicated Offering recipients – this is a voluntary initiative.

Our scheduled **January Dedicated Offering for Children’s Advocacy Center of Hampshire County** was postponed and will be held on a day to be announced.

Our **February Dedicated Offering** on the 16th will be for the **Homework House** in Holyoke. Designed to strengthen the quality of education for all children in Holyoke, the Homework House provides free, individualized tutoring and mentoring. At the Homework House, children in Holyoke’s most economically challenged neighborhoods can experience learning success in a safe, nurturing environment with strong academic and social support. Children ages 6-12 may attend after-school programs at sites located in the neighborhoods where they live and go to school. These programs focus on homework assistance and developing math and reading skills.

In addition, the Homework House offers Summer Readers & Leaders (SRL), a free five-week long intensive literacy program, which helps prevent summer learning loss in students from Holyoke’s low-resource neighborhoods. Over the five weeks, children work with credentialed reading teachers on literacy activities. They also experience a combination of other fun indoor and outdoor pursuits such as arts and crafts, games, weekly excursions to the library, and other field trips. The summer program includes breakfast, lunch, and a snack, so that children who might otherwise go hungry are nourished and ready to learn.

Beginning in 2006 as a ministry of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Springfield, the Homework House is no longer formally affiliated with them, but the ties between the two communities remain strong. The Homework House continues to carry out their social justice vision in its mission, values, and programming. In 2007 it was incorporated as an “independent, non-sectarian organization that serves all children regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, or gender.” For a full description of the Homework House and its many activities and opportunities to serve, please visit their website at <https://homeworkhouseholyokey.org/>.

Notes from the President

Hello friends,

Unitarian Universalism is a wide and wonderful world filled with beloved people!

Just this past Sunday [January 19], I was overjoyed to hear our fellow UU **Molly Moss** nail the Sunday Puzzle with Will Shortz on National Public Radio. My feeling of pride was huge! (Great job Molly!)

When I attend a New England District gathering (to learn about spiritual leadership or Our Whole Lives Sexuality Education), I meet people with whom I feel an immediate affinity. I cannot tell you how many profound conversations I have shared with people I only just met when I gather with other UUs. (You too can access these fruitful gatherings [here](#).)

Susan and **Steve Rice** attended the [General Assembly](#) of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations two years ago and brought us back the Dismantling Systemic White Supremacy program that is still going strong. Here is what Susan says about the experience of GA: *I had not attended a General Assembly (GA) since living in Texas, and I was truly blown away by how wonderfully different it is now as compared to 15 years ago. The changes directly reflect the changes of our world. It is truly inspiring to see the honest and unblinking self-examination that our UUA has undergone. No longer is our GA a sea of white and grey. We are so much more multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-gendered, and multi-generational. It has taken a concerted effort to bring the marginalized voices into the center. The UUA has deeply invested in developing a culture of diversity and institutional change that makes me endlessly proud to call myself a Unitarian Universalist.*

This June, GA is in Rhode Island, June 24-28, the closest it will be for the next five years! We can send four voting delegates in addition to anyone who might want to go. Do you want to attend? Please let the Board know. We have funds to help with the fees.

As we continue to consider sharing our UU faith with all who would like to join our hopeful, loving community, the Board will be sending out a questionnaire in February. We follow that with a second Congregational Conversation March 22, and Cottage Meetings in April.

And, it is just about time for our annual stewardship campaign – our ongoing opportunity to support our faith through monetary pledges. Keep an eye out for more information on our remarkable congregation and the opportunities we have to support our mission.

Yours in faith, Karen

Membership

Welcome to our newest members, who signed our Membership Book on January 26! They are **Nancy Hampshire** of Granby, **Adam Blandford** of Belchertown, and **Leslie Matlen** and **Frederick Bloom**, who make their home in Amherst.

There will be a special opportunity after the February 23 service to sign the Membership Book. But you may become a member any Sunday – just let **Anne Cohen** (cohensinrockport@gmail.com) or **Janis Gray** (jsgray@crocker.com) of the Membership Committee know, so they can recruit two members of our Board of Trustees to witness your signature. We know **Rev. Rachael** would love to witness the occasion as well!

Social Action

Just One Thing On the second Sunday of most Sundays, a basket is placed in the foyer. On **February 9** the collection will be part of the “Special Collection” for women leaving prison: the “Jail to Community Task Force,” a project of the Franklin County Interfaith Council and St. John’s Episcopal Church, Ashfield.

Items needed: medium to large **backpacks** (new or gently used); **clothing** (new socks, new underwear, gently used or new sweatshirts); snack food; toiletries; journals; **gift cards** for national chains (Cumberland Farms, Target, Walmart). Please give gift cards directly to Rev. **Rachael**, **Rebecca Fricke**, DRE, or a **member of the RE Ministry**. Questions: talk with Rev. Rachel or Rebecca Fricke.

Not Bread Alone On February 29, seven UUs are needed to provide a delicious lunch at Not Bread Alone, the soup kitchen in the rear of First Congregational Church (access through its Spring Street parking lot). No experience is needed, as we work under the direction of the kitchen manager. Have fun and meet new people! We work in shifts. Cooks: 9:30 A.M. -12:00 P.M.; servers: 11:45 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.; clean-up crew: 12:00 - @ 2:30 P.M. If you can help, please contact **Mary Beth Seminario**, mbsem@comcast.net, 413-253-0894. THANK YOU!!

Religious Education Ministry

Jacy Armenti, **Casey** and **Tess** are busy with a room full of preschoolers! The 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!

The K-6th group continues to grow, and I really appreciate the consistent attendance that I am seeing from families. I know how hard it is to fit everything into seven days. I often hear parents wonder why we can’t go back to having one day off for rest and church. How far back would we have to go? Certainly more than two decades. I hope that both children and adults are appreciating the whole-congregation services. There is sometimes an element of experimentation and Rev. Rachael and I take a few leaps of faith when we try things out. Thank you for leaping with us. If you have any comments or suggestions, or even future topics please let me know.

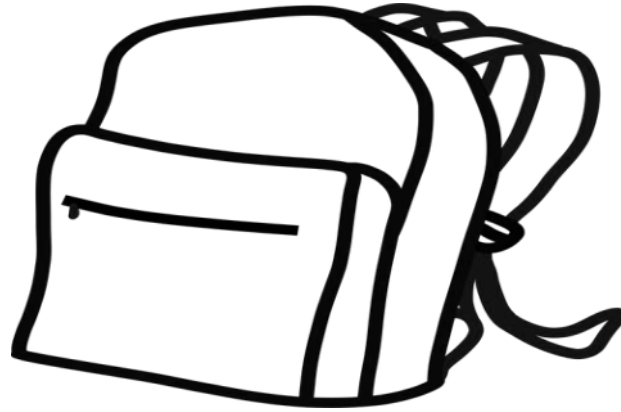
The Coming of Age youth, 7th-9th graders, are in the middle of their year of exploration. In January the group was joined by three adult (non-parent) participants who are helping to broaden our discussions even more than they have been this past fall. Since September we have covered topics including UU Beliefs, Spirituality and Practice and UU Theology. In February we will be discussing Justice and social action.

Please come to our **Breakout Service** on **February 9**. This year we are collecting backpacks, hygiene products, food and sweatshirts for women getting out of jail. Please look for the notice on page 5 in this newsletter for more information. We will be organizing this break out in a slightly different way than in the past in order to encourage more mixing of ages and interests. Come check it out.

YoUUs,

Rebecca Fricke

Director of Religious Education



Special Collection Service

Culminating on February 9, 2020

medium to large backpacks (new or very gently used)

Snack food * Toiletries * Journals

Clothing (new socks, new underwear, gently used or new sweatshirts)

gift cards for national chains

(Cumberland Farms, Target, and Walmart)

Drop off in the large marked collection boxes. Please give your gift cards directly to Rev. Rachael, Rebecca or a member of the RE Ministry.

Our service is part of a larger initiative of the Franklin Interfaith Council which is working with the Jail to Community Task Force and St. John's Episcopal Church in Ashfield, MA. Questions? Talk to Rev. Rachael, Rebecca Fricke (DRE).

Minister's Letter

Dear UUSA,

We have been working our way through the principles this year in worship, and February has us up to number five: "The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large." In other words, everyone needs to have a say. You'll hear more about my thoughts on this principle in my sermon on 2/26, but I would like to make you aware of an opportunity to represent UUSA at this year's Unitarian Universalist General Assembly in Providence in June.

Some of you have heard about **Susan and Steve Rice's** experience of attending GA a few years ago. General Assembly is a gathering of UUs to steer the course of Unitarian Universalism. Part business meeting, part convention, part spiritual experience, GA brings together UUs from across the continent and around the world. Here's where the democracy comes in: each congregation can send a number of member delegates to represent us and vote on our behalf in the assembly. If you are considering attending GA, start by exploring the website <https://www.uua.org/ga>. Early registration (with the lowest registration cost and best access to housing, financial aid, and volunteer opportunities) ends March 15. There is also some subsidy available from UUSA to encourage participation.

General Assembly can be a life-changing experience. Attending GA put me on the track to becoming the minister I am today. Participating in GA gives Unitarian Universalists new ways to approach challenges in our communities and congregations and opportunities to deepen our faith.

Though only delegates get to vote in the assembly hall, every person who attends GA has the opportunity to bring new inspiration back to the congregation. I am attending and would love to share this experience with many of you.

In faith,

Rev. Rachael

Social Events

Lunch with the Minister Friday, February 7 in the Minister's Study, 1:00 P.M.

UUSA Winter Open Studio February 7 Do you paint? Would you enjoy some company while you paint? Want some helpful feedback on your work? If so, this is for you!

Come join the UUSA Winter Open Studio for painters of all media and all levels in our beautiful Social Hall this winter. Paint or draw whatever you'd like: bring photo references, finish something you started, bring still life materials to paint, or just make up something. Come to one or come to all sessions – it's up to you!

We 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 .M. on the first and third Fridays of each month:**

Feb. 7 and 21 Mar. 6 and 20 Apr. 3 and maybe 17

Here's what you need to do:

Let us know you are coming by copying this link and pasting in your browser: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/123DPsJI6SkODszWUcyz_jhRXto7es8ux_IahiJb5w0I/edit?usp=sharing

Bring \$5 to \$10 cash to help cover the cost of heat and lights.

Bring a **shower curtain or drop cloth** to protect your table and the floor under you.

Bring your **stuff**: paints, brushes, canvases, portable easel, etc.

Bring your **lunch and beverage**.

Questions? Contact **Susanne Personnette**.

The Women's Lunch Group meets on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month at noon for spirited conversation over local, inexpensive cuisine. **The luncheon February 13** will be Judie's Restaurant, 51 North Pleasant St., 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 **Mary McKenna**.

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

Green Sanctuary

How Candidates Stack Up on Climate Change The presidential candidates' detailed plans offer many interesting ideas to address climate change that are well worth reviewing. Please click to our [website](#) for access to each candidates' plans. **To date, there are no climate change policy proposals from the Republican candidates.**

Our Caring Ministries



You are not dead yet, it's not too late

To open your depths by plunging into them
and drink in the life
that reveals itself quietly there.

Rainer Maria Rilke

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, Karen Mack, Martha Nelson, Lynn Sussman, Gordon Wyse** and **Naomi Yanis**.

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

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

Denominational Affairs



Don't know what you're doing for summer work?? Or do you know an inspiring young adult who has skills to serve our campers? Camp Unirondack is currently hiring amazing individuals for work in the kitchen, maintenance crew, and counselors! We also have positions for select leadership roles as well! Applications opened January 1 and we begin scheduling interviews beginning February 1 so if you or someone you know is thinking of applying, tell them to start their application as soon as possible.

[Job Descriptions for Open Positions](#)

[Click here for Application!](#)

Interdenominational Affairs



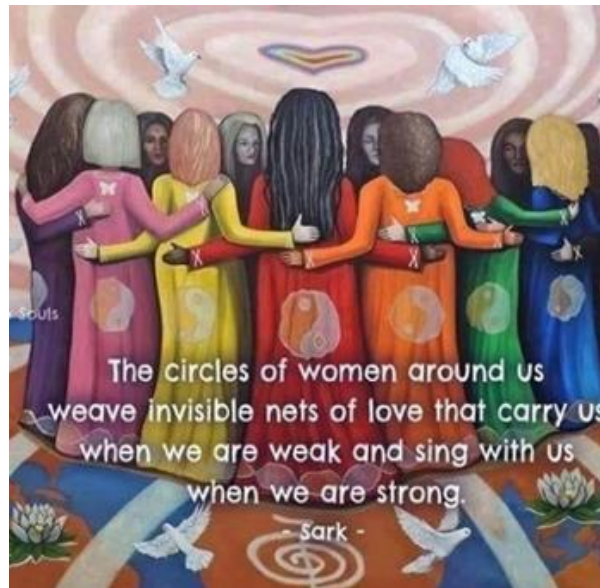
ION Corner At the December meeting of the Interfaith Opportunities Network (ION), members of the New England Peace Pagoda raised concerns about the 400th anniversary of the Plymouth landing as well as how Native Peoples are depicted on our state flag and seal. Since that landing, as Americans expanded their boundaries, Native Peoples were slaughtered and their lands destroyed and/or taken. Even today with fracking and gas line expansion, they fight to retain their waters and land. This fight, often against large corporations, is just part of the larger fight for environmental justice in which many people are involved.

At our January meeting, ION members discussed how we and our member congregations can respond. Presently, there is legislation that would support a commission to study and change, if appropriate, the state seal and flag. Our own Western Mass. representatives support a change, but many other representatives have been silent. In order to reach people across the state, we decided to send a detailed letter to ION member congregations asking they contact other MA congregations of their own denomination. In turn, those congregations' members could contact their own rep.

Additionally, at our January meeting we decided to assemble a list of the environmental issues in which our ION members are involved and actions being taken. The Goodwin Memorial representative reported on the work that's been done so far, including a new boiler and oil tank; tree removal; installing outside stairway hand rails; filling in holes; and improving support for an unstable toilet. She said that they were most thankful for the support they've received and that because of it don't feel isolated as they had.

Respectfully, Mary Beth Seminario, UUSA ION representative.

The Merry Widows Widows of all ages who have lost their life partners and who are now deciding to move forward and make new friends who “get it” are invited to form a new group organized by **Mary McKenna**. “This is a social group where we can learn to have fun again, share a meal, talk and support each other. This is not a bereavement group,” she writes. “I am looking forward to creating gatherings twice a month at local restaurants, movies, plays, museums, parks and for other fun events. Please join us!” To do so, RSVP and leave your phone/email address with **Mary McKenna**.



Art Exhibit New works by **Ben Shohan**, son of UUSA members **Jane** and **Herschel Shohan**, are now on exhibit at the Smith College Student Union in Northampton. Ben’s one-person show runs through February 8.

