

# THE AMHERST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST NEWSLETTER

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

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**



## Important Information

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## NEWSLETTER

Copy Editor: Janis Gray

Production Editor: John Foster

Deadline for submissions: 15th of each month.

Email them to [jsgray@crocker.com](mailto:jsgray@crocker.com).

Please understand we cannot cut and paste PDF files into the newsletter, so submissions should either be Word documents, rich text files or written in the body of the email. 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

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**Since March 15, 2020, we have been holding our Sunday Services online to help protect the health of our community, and we will continue to do so through June 2021, or until a vaccine or reliable treatment is found for COVID-19.**

There is a great Zoom update available. Rev. Rachael suggests that we all update the application; it'll allow us more control over our breakout rooms as well as give us the option to use Closed Captioning! If you need help with this, watch this video at <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362233-Upgrade-update-to-the-latest-version> or please email Lea at [office@uusocietyamherst.org](mailto:office@uusocietyamherst.org), who will take you through the steps.

**Sunday, December 6, 10:30 A.M. – Agency for Good**

**The Rev. Rachael Hayes**

Join us a few minutes before 10:30 A.M. by clicking <https://bit.ly/2JwxdUb>

Or call in: 646 876 9923 and enter the Meeting ID: 993 7990 2261.

**Sunday, December 13, 10:30 A.M. – Hanukkah: Finding Blessings**

**The Rev. Rachael Hayes**

Join us a few minutes before 10:30 A.M. by clicking <https://bit.ly/2JwxdUb>

Or call in: 646 876 9923 and enter the Meeting ID: 993 7990 2261.

**Wednesday, December 16, 7:00 P.M. – December Vespers: Light All The Lights**

**The Rev. Rachael Hayes**

Join us a few minutes before 7:00 P.M. by clicking <https://bit.ly/2JwxdUb>

Or call in: 646 876 9923 and enter the Meeting ID: 993 7990 2261.

**Sunday, December 20, 10:30 A.M. – Solstice: Dark of Winter**

**The Rev. Rachael Hayes**

Join us a few minutes before 10:30 A.M. by clicking <https://bit.ly/2JwxdUb>

Or call in: 646 876 9923 and enter the Meeting ID: 993 7990 2261.

**Thursday, December 24, 5:00 P.M. – Christmas Eve: Bringing Christmas Home**

**The Rev. Rachael Hayes**

Join us a few minutes before 5:00 P.M. by clicking <https://bit.ly/2JwxdUb>

Or call in: 646 876 9923 and enter the Meeting ID: 993 7990 2261.

**Sunday, December 27, 10:30 A.M. – You do not Walk Alone**

**The Pastoral Care Team of the UUSA**

One of the things many notice about our beloved UUSA is the way we care for one another, which is central to who we are as a UU community.

During this service we will meet the members of the Pastoral Care Team. They will share with us thoughts of being on the team, what it means to them and hopefully to others.

Join us a few minutes before 10:30 A.M. by clicking on <https://bit.ly/2JwxdUb>

Or call in: 646 876 9923 and enter the Meeting ID: 993 7990 2261.

**If you would like help getting to know ZOOM for use as a meeting participant, or if you would like help setting up a ZOOM meeting for your congregational event, committee meeting, or small group, please**

*Texts of some sermons are available to members and friends of UUSA by request. Send email to [office@uussocietyamherst.org](mailto:office@uussocietyamherst.org). Some of our sermons are also posted on [www.uusocietyamherst.org](http://www.uusocietyamherst.org). Click on the "SERMON ARCHIVE" button on the right side of the home page.*

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## Dedicated Offerings

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One Sunday every month (except for June, July, and August), we have traditionally scheduled a Dedicated Offering to recognize and financially support worthy organizations engaged in projects that reflect our guiding Unitarian-Universalist principles.

The Dedicate Offering (DO) Committee met last summer, and due to our Zoom only services and lower offerings, we decided on just one DO every three months rather than every month.

The DO Committee recently met to chose The Amherst Survival Center as our DO recipient for January—March. If you have a suggestion for April—June, please email **Carolyn Holstein** your suggestion.

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## Minister's Letter

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Dear UUSA,

We can do hard things! I've said it so many times, but we get to practice it over and over. The theme of December is Agency: we have power and can use it to transform the world for the better.

We also have a lot of holidays in December, and in the spirit of agency and of community, I'd love to see more of you in the services! I'm looking for readers and musicians to pre-record pieces for all of the holiday services. If you would like to do a reading, please email me [revrachel@uusocietyamherst.org](mailto:revrachel@uusocietyamherst.org), and if you would like to contribute music, whether you regularly perform in the choir or not, please email [Brenda music@uusocietyamherst.org](mailto:Brenda.music@uusocietyamherst.org).

One of the beloved traditions of this congregation's Christmas Eve service is lighting candles to "Silent Night." Obviously, it won't be quite the same this year, but we have a plan! We'd love to see all of you passing the light. You can make a recording yourself, passing a lit candle from the left side of your frame to the right in a somewhat dark room (like this!), or you can log into a Zoom meeting with Lea to record your bit. (Lea will be available on Wednesday, December 2, Monday, December 7 and Wednesday, December 9 from 5:00 – 6:30 p.m. at

<https://zoom.us/j/4791737408?pwd=dnAxUFFLd2lSNEEzaWsrK2RBb1R0dz09>

(Meeting ID: 479 173 7408; Passcode: UUSA)

We'll need all videos by Sunday, December 13 to edit them together for the service. We'll light candles live during the service as well, but this video will be worth the extra planning, I promise!

I'm going to host one of the breakout rooms in social hour after the service on December 6 to chat with people who are new (or newish) and would like to meet other new folks, ask some questions about the UUSA and Unitarian Universalism, or are curious about membership. No pressure, this is more of a time to check in, get to know each other and be known. If you won't be able to make that time but would like to have such a conversation, let me know!

And finally, one of the ministries of this congregation that you have entrusted to me is the Minister's Discretionary Fund. This fund exists to support members of the community who are struggling financially: help with bills and expenses, for the most part. If you're having a hard time making ends meet, we can help. Drop me an email or leave me a voicemail. If you are doing okay right now and would like to share with your neighbors, you can send checks designated "Minister's Discretionary Fund" to the office or donate online with "MDF" in the message field. We have enough when we share.



Wishing you all the joy of all the holidays and all the peace of winter,

Rev. Rachael

PS: We hit a nice groove with the Candletime Vespers in November. I'll keep hosting one simple vespers service a month for a little while and see how it goes! Next month's service will take place on December 17.

## Family Activity - Stones of Faith

Find a rocky place. It could be in your backyard or near a river in a park. Collect five smooth stones and five jagged rocks. Choose rocks you can carry.\* These rocks will be symbols of the monthly theme Rev. Rachael and the RE program will be talking about over the course of the year. Set the rocks in a visible place in your house or in your yard. If you are creative, you can paint the theme words (bolded) on each smooth rock and each jagged rock. Or create a label to go with each rock. As the months go by talk about what the rock symbolizes and what you believe. Think of examples of how your family uses these beliefs in your everyday life. Have fun and send Rev. Rachael and Rebecca a photo of your collection!

-Five Smooth Stones of Liberal Religion	Five Jagged Rocks of the UU Faith
<p>Revelation is unsealed. <b>Living Tradition</b></p> <p>We are in a relationship with each other. <b>Consent - Love</b></p> <p>We are morally obliged to seek justice. <b>Justice</b></p> <p>People make good things happen. <b>Work for Change - Agency</b></p> <p>We strive for an attitude of ultimate optimism. <b>Hope</b></p> 	<p>Everything is connected. <b>Connection</b></p> <p>People are sacred and worthy just for being alive. <b>Sacredness and Worth</b></p> <p>We seek justice and try again and again to make the world better. <b>Courageous Love</b></p> <p>What we believe has changed over time and will continue to change. <b>Ongoing Revelation</b></p> <p>How we live is more important to us than what happens after we die. <b>Salvation Here and Now</b></p> 

Note\* Make sure you are in a place where it is OK to remove the stones. In state and federal parks you are not allowed to take anything home.

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## Beloved Conversations

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Nineteen folks from UUSA are participating in Beloved Conversations, a virtual workshop series by the UUA which has initially focused on the internal work we each need to do to engage in racial justice. The program includes individual study of videos and readings, accompanied by reflection prompts and suggested conversations with “critical friends” chosen by the participants; bi-weekly small group conversations in “learning pods;” and larger, monthly, facilitated Making Meaning sessions that bring in UUs from across the US and Canada. **There will be another program in the Spring; registration will begin in February.**

**Susan Rice**, one of our members attending Beloved Conversations this fall, notes that the UUSA Board is offering full scholarships to the workshop series for up to 20 people with the hope that more will attend. She adds, “It could lead to dramatic change in our culture in the UUSA.”

Those of us in the fall session were impressed by a live presentation by Tema Okun during a Making Meaning session. Here we share part of an essay she’d written earlier that expressed the same profound insights -- and a few examples of the 15 characteristics she names and some of her suggested “antidotes” (for the full essay, see [https://collectiveliberation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/White\\_Supremacy\\_Culture\\_Okun.pdf](https://collectiveliberation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/White_Supremacy_Culture_Okun.pdf)):

### From White Supremacy Culture, by Tema Okun:

This is a list of characteristics of white supremacy culture that show up in our organizations. . . . The characteristics listed below . . . are damaging because they promote white supremacy thinking. Because we all live in a white supremacy culture, these characteristics show up in the attitudes and behaviors of all of us – people of color and white people.

#### **Perfectionism**

Two antidotes: develop a learning organization, where it is expected that everyone will make mistakes and those mistakes offer opportunities for learning; create an environment where people can recognize that mistakes sometimes lead to positive results

#### **Sense of Urgency**

Two antidotes: leadership which understands that things take longer than anyone expects; realize that rushing decisions takes more time in the long run because inevitably people who didn’t get a chance to voice their thoughts and feelings will at best resent and at worst undermine the decision because they were left unheard

#### **Only One Right Way**

Two antidotes: look for the tendency for a group or a person to keep pushing the same point over and over out of a belief that there is only one right way and then name it; when working with communities from a different culture than yours or your organization’s, be clear that you have some learning to do about the communities’ ways of doing; never assume that you or your organization know what’s best for the community in isolation from meaningful relationships with that community

#### **Fear of Open Conflict**

Two antidotes: distinguish between being polite and raising hard issues; don’t require those who raise hard issues to raise them in “acceptable” ways, especially if you are using the ways in which issues are raised as an excuse not to address those issues

#### **Right to Comfort**

Two antidotes: understand that discomfort is at the root of all growth and learning; understand that discomfort is at the root of all growth and learning.

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## Social Action

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UUSA at Not Bread Alone On October 31, **Mary Beth Seminario** was at Not Bread Alone (NBA), the soup kitchen at First Congregational Church in Amherst, loading bags with produce, and **Anne Moore** was helping distribute food as well as clean up following the meal.

On **Saturday, January 30**, our Society's help is again needed to provide a delicious lunch to our hungry neighbors. Only a few hours of time are needed from anyone as we work in shifts. More hands make easier and faster work. Morning people can join Mary Beth as she packs donated produce in bags from 9:30 - @ 11:00 A.M. People who like to cook can join others making salads, entrees and desserts from 9:30 A.M. – 12:00 P.M. Late risers can help package cooked items and help with their distribution to guests from 12:00 - 1:30 P.M.

At NBA, safety measures include sign-in, temperature checks, glove & mask wearing. Street access is from the Spring Street parking lot behind the church. If you would like help please contact **Mary Beth Seminario**, [mbsem@comcast.net](mailto:mbsem@comcast.net), 253-0894. THANK YOU.

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## Adult Programs

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UUSA Women's Spiritual Practice Group starts first week of December All relationships take tending to, including our relationship to our own spirituality. Spirituality points to the essence of who we are and our place of belonging in the greater interdependent web of the universe, seen and unseen. Love, mystery, awe, confusion, doubt and despair are all a part of our journey. We will gather on Zoom twice a month to study, practice and share our experiences of tending to our own human consciousness. Come as you are. No previous experience with any particular types of practices are necessary.

We will begin by reading *Awakening Joy: 10 Steps to Happiness* by James Baraz (2012 edition) and trying out the suggested practices for ourselves. If you are interested, email **Jess Murphy**.

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## Social Events

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Women's Circle meets via Zoom at noon on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month. Next meeting: December 10. This is an opportunity to meet with friends and become better acquainted with other women in the congregation whom you may not know as well.

Join by clicking <https://bit.ly/35nW8jB> Meeting ID: 983 8988 5674; Password: 135383 or call in at +1 646 876 9923 and enter Meeting ID. Please contact **Sophie Rogers** if you want to be in the email notification list.

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## Our Caring Ministries

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“But I know, somehow, that only when it is dark enough can you see the stars.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.

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, Kate Dahlstedt, Gabriela Horvay, Mary Latham, Karen Mack, Lynn Sussman, and Gordon Wyse**.

Our Pastoral Care Team coordinators are **Fran Plumer** and **Charlie Atwood**. Other members are the **Elizabeth Alcaide, 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 ones.

# HERE WE HAVE GATHERED

*Here we have gathered, gathered side by side, circle of kinship, come and step inside!  
May all who seek here find a kindly word; may all who speak here feel they have been heard.  
Sing now together this, our hearts' own song.  
(Hymn #360, Singing the Living Tradition)*

Just for fun, we present a few random bits from the UUSA's December newsletters of 1995, 2006 (sadly, we could not find December 2005!) and 2017. If you were with us then, what other memories do they jog? If new to us, what might they tell you about where we've been? Do they inspire ideas for where we might yet go?

## December 1995:

**Religious Education** The interest in our children's program – reflected in increased attendance – is exciting! Even as the children and staff warm to each other with growing familiarity, we continue to have visitors looking us over. Herein lies a difficulty: We have too few chairs. We need 10 news ones, sized for our youngest, and the sturdy variety cost \$20 each. Can you help? The donation of one chair will mean the use of one less milk crate, and your generosity this way means a lot to all of us downstairs.



**Sunday, December 3, 1:30 P.M. "Music for a Sunday Afternoon"** continues [in our Sanctuary] with The University Women's Choir! The University Women's Choir is made up of 14 undergraduate UMass students from a variety of academic programs. . . . This program will include a set of North German Baroque motets, several selections by German Romantic composers including Mendelssohn and Beethoven, and a set of songs in a variety of styles about birds.

The Choir's conductor, John Cavicchia, is a masters candidate in the music department at the University. . . . John and the Women's Choir gratefully acknowledge the generous efforts of **Fran Plumer** and the others at the UU Society who have made it possible for them to be included in the *Music for a Sunday Afternoon* concert series.

**For Your Information** If you are lucky enough to receive some nifty new high-tech equipment this holiday season, and don't know what to do with that old fax machine – we could really use one in our office. Just think: You could help bring our office into the 21<sup>st</sup> century! If you have a fax machine or external fax-modem you would care to donate, please call our office and give us the good news!

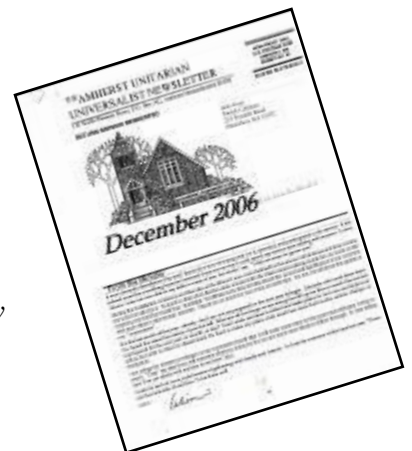
## December 2006

**Meetinghouse painting update** As fall begins its transformation to winter, it is now clear that 2006 will pass without completion of the painting of the exterior of the Meetinghouse. The Board of Trustees deeply regrets this development. Unfortunately, we have no good options at this time. Exterior painting under late-November weather conditions is not advisable.

We are able to report, however, that we have reached a new agreement in principle with the painting contractor. This agreement gives us some confidence that we will see quick action on the painting project with the return of warm weather in the spring.

**On Sunday, December 10**, at 2:00 P.M. in the sanctuary, the Stained Glass Window Committee will host *Opalescent Images: The Stained Glass of Tiffany and La Far*, the second in a series of lectures relating to our stained glass windows. The speaker will be Julie Sloan. . . . Her conservation and research projects have won many awards, including grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Samuel Kress Foundation, the Graham Foundation for Advancement in the Arts, and the Arts & Crafts Fund.

Need an idea for your Christmas shopping list? The Stained Glass Committee will be selling framed photos of our beautiful windows during the Social Hour on December 10. If you would like to purchase photos at another time, please contact **Carolyn Cave**.



**Guest at Your Table** Once again we will be participating in the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) Guest at Your Table campaign. Through the work of the UUSC, many indigenous groups throughout the world have been helped. The money raised supports the work of the UUSC. . . . The Guest at Your Table experience of families learning together has built lasting connections to UU values for generations of UU youth.

Bring home a guest . . . put a Guest at Your table box on your family’s table and discuss together what it means to welcome a guest at your table. Boxes are available by contacting **Maria Racca, DRE**, or envelopes are available on the back table in the sanctuary.

### December 2017

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

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



**Greetings from your Ministerial Search Committee (MSC)** The big news is that we were ready to “go live” with our Congregational Record on November 30, making it confidentially available to ministers in search through a secure web server run by the UUA. Through the following weeks, we learn through the UUA Transitions office which ministers express an interest in our congregation. . . .

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

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

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

86 – members and friends participating in 11 cottage meetings.

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

39 – participated in the BCT workshop.

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

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

6 – number of Ministerial Search Committee members.

2 – number of MSC retreats.

