

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

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Deadline for submissions: 15th of each month.

Email them to 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!

Printed on recycled paper



Schedule of Services

Since March 15, 2020, we have been
holding our Sunday Services online
to help protect the health of our community.

Sunday, February 7, 10:30 A.M. – *Love Brings Us Together*

The Rev. Rachael Hayes, Rebecca Fricke (DRE) and The Religious Education Ministry

Join us a few minutes before 10:30 A.M. by clicking on <http://bit.ly/39w9LAQ>. Or call in: 646 876 9923 and enter the Meeting ID: 993 7990 2261.

Sunday, February 14, 10:30 A.M. – *Side With Love Sunday*

What if to “side with love” meant making bold, faith-full choices? What if it were even a little bit scary? This worship service brings together sterling worship leaders and musicians from across the country to offer hopeful, moving, challenging reminders about what we, as Unitarian Universalists, are called to do, and BE, in the world. Join us a few minutes before 10:30 A.M. by clicking on <http://bit.ly/39w9LAQ>. Or call in: 646 876 9923 and enter the Meeting ID: 993 7990 2261.

Sunday, February 21, 10:30 A.M. – *The Power of Connection*

The Rev. Rachael Hayes

Join us a few minutes before 10:30 A.M. by clicking on <http://bit.ly/39w9LAQ>. Or call in: 646 876 9923 and enter the Meeting ID: 993 7990 2261.

Sunday, February 28, 10:30 A.M., 10:30 A.M. – *Joint Service w/ May Memorial UU Society, Syracuse, NY*

The Rev. Rachael Hayes and The Rev. Jo VonRue

Join us a few minutes before 10:30 A.M. by clicking on <http://bit.ly/39w9LAQ>. Or call in: 646 876 9923 and enter the Meeting ID: 993 7990 2261.

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

Dedicated Offerings

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 the result of lower offerings, we decided on just one DO every three months rather than every month.

Our Autumn Dedicated Offering raised \$2707.58 for **Craig’s Doors**. In January, we changed our plans when we felt called to hold a special Dedicated Offering for **Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Presbyterian Church** in Springfield, MA. This small congregation had incurred over \$100,000 in damage from a suspicious fire on December 28. We will share the results of this offering in our March newsletter.

The February-March Dedicated Offering from the UUSA will be for the **Amherst Survival Center**. According to their website, as unemployment reaches record highs, the demand for the Survival Center’s services has and will continue to increase. As we know, the pandemic and its economic fallout are far from over. Feeding America estimates that food insecurity in Western MA will grow by 55% this year, meaning that one in seven of our neighbors will not have access to the food they need.

Please donate to support the Survival Center’s response to COVID-19. Financial contributions give the Survival Center the flexibility to respond as needs change. The Center can buy canned goods, extra milk, or a specific size of diapers as needed. Please give generously. Thank you so much for sharing what you can.

In Memoriam

Herschel Strauss Shohan

April 9, 1928 - January 4, 2021

Herschel Strauss Shohan, husband of member **Jane Shohan** and a longtime friend of our UU Society, was born in Pittsburgh, PA to Jacob B. Shohan and Marcia Strauss in 1928. He attended school in West Orange, NJ, and graduated from Ethical Culture Fieldston high school in Riverdale, NY.

After receiving his B.A. from Oberlin College in 1950 with a major in English, Herschel was accepted at Harvard Law School but, after a year, he found it uncongenial to his abilities and interests. This caused him to lose his student deferment, and he was subsequently drafted into the US Marines during the Korean War.

Herschel's typing skills placed him in the squadron office of the new Marine Air Wing at Cherry Point, NC. He ended his two-year tour in a Marine air squadron base in Edenton, NC. In 1956, Herschel earned an M.A. with honors in English at Columbia University, with a concentration in early American literature. For several years, he wrote for various advertising firms in Manhattan, including J. Walter Thompson, where he served on various accounts.

It was during this period that he met Jane Smithwick in a 6th floor art gallery on upper Madison Avenue, on the last day of a Picasso show. They enjoyed a Manhattan romance of a year and married in June 1963. The wedding took place in Jane's pre-Civil War family home in Chester, SC. Their happy 57-year marriage was a study in contrasts: His mother's parents and his father were Jews from Eastern Europe who had settled in Boston. Jane's family were devout Protestants from Northern England and Scotland, who had remained in the Carolinas since the 1600s. He was an only child, she was the fifth of six children.

As he continued his career in advertising, academia was still calling to Herschel. In 1966 he re-enrolled at Columbia University, and received his Ph.D. in 17th-century English literature. Herschel then taught at Hunter College in New York, NY. Following that, he joined the faculty of the English Department at Ohio Wesleyan University in Delaware, OH; then that of North Adams State College (now the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts) in North Adams, MA.

In his retirement, Herschel enjoyed a nine-year stint as co-founder of Playwrights in Progress, an organization dedicated to the staging of readings and productions of Western Massachusetts playwrights and playwright hopefuls. By then Herschel and Jane had moved from North Adams to Amherst, MA, where Herschel pursued his many interests. He studied Ancient Greek at UMass Amherst up to the Ph.D level, and took up the piano. He was passionate about government, and was active in local politics. He also regularly attended the Unitarian Universalist Society in Amherst with Jane. He was a dedicated runner throughout his adulthood, took yoga lessons weekly for decades, and exercised frequently, continuing right up until a few weeks prior to his death.

Jane and Herschel moved from their home on Sheerman Lane in Amherst to the retirement community of Applewood in 2016.

Herschel was endlessly optimistic and engaged, and loved meeting up with friends for discussions of politics and other matters. He had a deep fondness and respect for other people, and was known for listening to and showing a genuine personal interest in them. He was gentle and thoughtful, with a penetrating intellect.

He is survived by his beloved wife Jane, his daughter Jennine Pommier (Laurent) of Summit, NJ; son Ben Shohan of Northampton; and granddaughters Claire and Emily Pommier.

A memorial service will be scheduled at a later time.

INVITE TO SMALL GROUPS OPEN HOUSE SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7

(PLEASE RSVP BY FEBRUARY 1)

How do we in our Society get to know one another beyond the connections we make during worship service and social hour?

Our Covenant Groups Committee is inviting everyone in our community to consider joining a Small Group. Covenant Groups (also called Small Groups) are gatherings of seven to nine people who meet regularly (once or twice a month) to get to know one another and to examine significant questions involving spirituality and how we live our lives. Meeting in small groups not only helps us develop closer ties with individuals but also nurtures our entire community.

We will be starting new groups in February, and will offer several schedule options including once-a-month, and twice-a-month meetings. (The meetings generally last two hours.)

Here is a sampling of recent topics from existing small groups:

- Share a poem or piece of music that has special significance for you.
- Consider telling a brief story about a significant change at any point in your life that was *completely unexpected*.
- How did you first learn about Native Americans? Did you have any stereotypes that grew out of these early experiences?
- What helps you stay sane and safe during the pandemic? What is its impact on your spiritual life, its impact on your view of humanity?

On Sunday, February 7 we will host a Small Group Open House on Zoom from 3:00 to 4:30 P.M. to give folks a sample of how these groups work. To help us prepare, please let **Lea Douville** know by February 1 if you plan on attending.

Thank you,

Small Groups Committee: Anne White, Mary Wyse, Gene Herman and Bill Cooksy

BELOVED CONVERSATIONS

Spring Term Registration Starts February 1! Beloved Conversations by the UUA “is a program for Unitarian Universalists seeking to embody racial justice as a spiritual practice. In *Beloved Conversations*, we are here to heal the impact of racism on our lives, in order to get free together.”

The registration ends on February 20 and the workshop begins in early March. If UUs from UUSA sign up with a group of 10 or more, we get a discount, so please contact **Steve Rice** to sign up. If you sign up on your own, you will NOT get the discount. There is still money authorized by our Board of Trustees to help with paying the workshop fee of \$150 each. For details on the program click on this link; <https://bcvirtual.meadville.edu/p/home>

Stewardship

The Pledge Drive is Here! **Coming Together, Moving Forward!**

Whether we're meeting via Zoom or we're able to re-convene in person sometime during next year, we need resources to keep the spiritual and social work of UUSA going. Supporting our minister and all the programs of UUSA, sustaining liberal religion and the transformative strength of UUSA requires support.

Look for materials in your mailbox, if you've not yet received them, to learn about all we're doing to **Come Together and Move Forward** during these difficult virus times and to see how to pledge. It's a trying time to keep UUSA healthy and growing, but we're sure our dynamic congregation has the strength to do it!

And. . . we have a Donor Angel who will help build the strength of UUSA by multiplying increases in amounts pledged and supporting new and lapsed pledges — details to come!

The UUSA Pledge Drive team has begun working on making it FUN to pledge your support to UUSA! Formerly and fondly known as the UUSA “Canvass,” we won't be able to do much of the social gath-

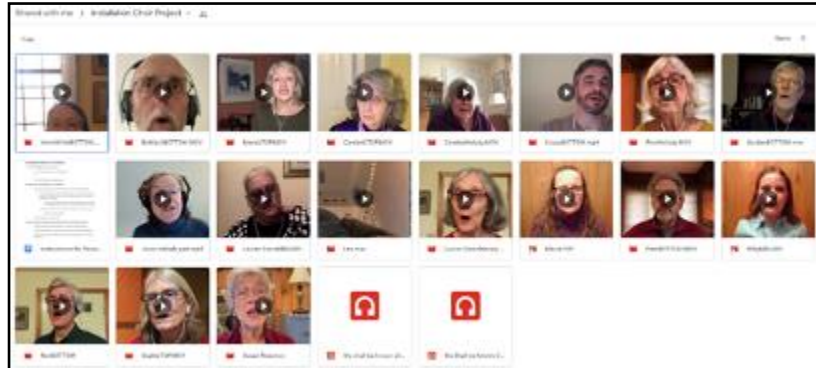
ering of years past, but we'll all feel better knowing our common effort keeps the spirit of liberal religion strong in the Pioneer Valley.

For more info contact any of our Pledge Drive team — Sue Alexander, Charlie Atwood, Jeanne Ballantine, Mary McKenna, Catharine Porter, Richard Roznoy (chair).

Music Notes



The UUSA choir was called into action to make a virtual choir video for Rev. Rachael's Installation on January 31. We hope you liked the result! Thanks to all who participated and helped to fund this ambitious undertaking. It felt so connected to do something like this! YES WE CAN!!!



Screenshot of a work in progress: Video files uploaded by choir members from home to a Google Drive folder used by Laudable Productions to create a music video for the installation service.

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to **Melinda Ewen** (in far bottom left in screenshot below) and **John Gerber** (at far bottom left), who became the first members to “virtually sign” our Membership Book in a breakout room after our service on January 24! Their “signatures,” traditionally witnessed by members of our Board of Trustees, were recorded on Google forms provided by our Congregational Administrator, **Lea Douville**. These forms will be kept for now with our ancient physical Membership Book, held up on Zoom for all to see by **the Rev. Rachael Hayes** (top far left).

Melinda, a UU since her grad school days in Indiana in the 1970s, moved to Amherst from California last fall to be near her daughter. John, a UU in the past in Indiana and elsewhere, has lived in Amherst since 1992. His decision to join our congregation came after he attending services in person and via Zoom over the last few years. During the ceremony, they and Rev. Rachael were joined by Board members **Susan Rice**, **Sue Alexander**, and **Karen Fisk**, and Membership Committee member **Janis Gray**. Afterward, many other members of the congregation gathered in the virtual breakout room to get to know our newest members and offer their congratulations. On behalf of us all, welcome, Melinda and John!

Rev. Rachael is planning more Virtual Book Signings after services in the months to come. If you have interest in joining or have questions about membership, just reach out to her!





Check out **Rebecca Fricke's** Director of Religious Education Blog for past descriptions of Sunday activities. Rebecca's blog includes written descriptions, website links and photos. Any questions? Ask! Want to get involved? Email Rebecca at dre@uusocietyamherst.org.

<https://u2canuu.wordpress.com/>

ION Corner

During the past two years, ION (Interfaith Opportunities Network) members have been involved in efforts to change our Massachusetts state seal and motto. We joined Indigenous people in statewide efforts in banishing this racist seal, which has represented our state for too long. It shows a native person standing under a white person's arm holding a broadsword, and the Latin motto "By the Sword we seek peace."

On July 6, our state House passed a bill, which Governor Baker signed, which will create a commission to study and recommend a new seal and motto to be completed by October 1 of this year. The changes must "faithfully reflect and embody the historic and contemporary commitment of the Commonwealth to justice, liberty, and equality and to spreading the opportunities and advantages of education." That commission will include Indigenous people.

Mary Beth Seminario, UUSA representative to ION

Social Action



Sanctuary It has been a long time since we've had an update about Lucio Perez, residing in sanctuary at First Church Congregational in Amherst, and Irida Kakhtiranova, residing in sanctuary at the UU Society of Northampton and Florence. But the work continues.

- Congressman James McGovern has worked closely with Lucio and Irida and submitted private bills to Congress asking for permanent relief for each of them. Many of the 25+ sanctuary leaders in the National Sanctuary Collective are pursuing a similar strategy, and it is our hope that these bills will be a path toward permanent relief for sanctuary leaders, and a step toward the wider movement for immigration justice.
- Both Lucio and Irida have cases pending in the courts, and their lawyers continue to work hard on their behalf.
- In partnership with the National Sanctuary Collective, we are asking for President Biden to commit to supporting sanctuary leaders and working for immigration reform. The UUSA has signed this petition as an organization, but you can also sign as an individual [here](#).

As you also likely know, sanctuary continues to be Lucio and Irida's reality, preventing them from working to sustain their families as they fight their cases. In this holiday season, we hope you will consider a tax-deductible donation to one or both funds, sustaining them and their families.

Donate to the [Immigrant Sanctuary Fund](#) to support Lucio Perez and others in sanctuary in our area.

Donate to the [Sanctuary Fund of the Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence](#) to support Irida Kakhtiranova and others in sanctuary.

Also to support sanctuary organizing by the Pioneer Valley Workers Center, please donate here www.pvworkerscenter.org

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Social Events

Women's Circle meets via ZOOM at noon on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month. Next meetings are February 11 and 25. These are opportunities 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.

Our Caring Ministries



“Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul
And sings the tune without the words
And never stops at all.”

— Emily Dickinson

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 **Fran Plumer** and **Charlie Atwood**. 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.

As always, 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. We also remember those affected in so many ways by the pandemic and by the recent events in the nation's capitol. We send a message of hope that all of us as individuals, and the nation as a whole can heal from these traumas.

Here We Have Gathered

*Here we have gathered, gathered side by side,
circle of kinship, come and step inside!
(Hymn #360, Singing the Living Tradition)*

A look back at UUSA based on newsletters from Februarys 25, 15 and 5 years ago:

February 1996:

Evening Star Service, Thursday, February 1, 7:00 P.M. This month's Evening Star Service will honor and celebrate the theme of "Candlemas." This day, on February 2, is halfway between winter solstice and spring equinox. It makes the return of the light and the transformation within us from an inner contemplative focus toward outer manifestations. Included in our service will be periods of meditation, music and sharing for personal, community and global healing. Please join us for this alternative way of worship, community-building and friendship!

The Sunday Evening Discussion Group will meet next on Sunday, March 10, 7:00 P.M. – 8:30 P.M. downstairs at the Meetinghouse. The autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois will be discussed. All are welcome.

The Welcoming Congregation The third series of The Welcoming Congregation will be offered this spring. At our annual meeting last June, the vote from our Society was an overwhelming UES to continue to the Welcoming Congregation program, which deals with welcoming gays and lesbians into our congregation. The five consecutive Wednesday night sessions will take place March 20, 27, April 3, 10, and 24 (taking one Wednesday off during spring break). The programs will run from 7:30 P.M. – 8:30 P.M. There will be two more events after this – the all-day retreat for the part of the program not yet covered, and participation in the Gay Pride March in Northampton, if it takes place this year. – Howard and Luba Reep

February 2006:

UUSA Cinema Club The newly formed UUSA CINEMA CLUB will hold its meeting at the end of February on a date to be announced in February's Order of Service and via email. In case you haven't heard, the first meeting was held on January 27 at **Pat McGarry's** home to discuss the format for this new group and to select one or two films for members to see in the coming month. We'll meet each month to discuss the films that were previously selected and hear from people who like to research various aspects of filmmaking. All are welcome, regular attendance is not required, and refreshments will be served. If you're a film lover and would like to join us, contact **Carol Rothery** as well as **Pat McGarry**.

Parenting Your UU Child There will be a gathering of parents and their children on Saturday, February 14 in the Meetinghouse, at which **Alison Wohler** will facilitate a presentation and discussion about providing, as parents, for a Unitarian Universalist religious education for our children. How do we answer, from our UU perspective, both the specific questions and the more general spiritual needs that our children inevitably have? We will gather at 4:30 in the afternoon. Child care will be provided while parents can talk with Alison from 5:00 – 5:45. Everyone will then gather back together for an informal pizza supper. Mark your calendars now!

Second Sunday Seminars The Green Sanctuary Committee has arranged four "seminars" in response to the most commonly chosen concerns expressed in the survey sent by the committee to the congregation last spring. "The Second Sunday Seminars" will be held on the second Sunday of February, March, April and May from 12:00 – 2:00 P.M. at the Meetinghouse. Child care will be provided and participants are welcome to bring a sandwich. The committee will supply drinks and cookies. The programs will be as follows:

February 12: *Endangered Species and Habitats in the United States*. A video will be shown, to be followed by discussion.

March 12: *Building "Green"* **Anne Perkins**, who recently received a national award for her work facilitating the construction of low-cost "green" housing in the Greenfield area, will lead a discussion of how to build "green."

April 9: *Hybrid Cars and Alternative Fuels* **Jay Stryker** will give his perspective, derived from a longtime interest in the topic, on the present and future of fuel-efficient transportation.

May 14: *Home Safe Home* **Ted Ennis**, who has extensively researched the use of toxic substances in the home, will provide concrete information and suggestions for making your home free of toxins.

We hope many of you will want to join in these seminars, which are presented as part of the effort to win designation as a Green Sanctuary congregation for the Unitarian Society of Amherst.

February 2016:

"Where do we stand?" After a Sunday Service of the same title January 17, our members, in a vote of 54-0, resolved that the Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst will:

Engage in an intentional and ongoing process of dialogue and education, acknowledging how affluence and privilege in our own lives affect our perspective on issues of race and equality;

Speak truth to power by openly supporting the Black Lives Matter movement and that as a concrete symbol . . . display a banner indicating [a] principled and public call for authentic and enduring racial justice;

By standing on the side of love, the Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst seeks to harness love's power in the struggle against oppression.

On January 18 – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – **Steve Rice** (at top in photo) and **Glen Bertrand** (below) braved the cold and windy elements to make our stand known on the streets.



Tuesday Noons – Lunch with the Minister Bring your lunch and join **Alison** on Tuesday Noons at the Meetinghouse. No need to call, just show up. If there are five or fewer, we'll have lunch around the table in my office. If we have more than five we have the Conference Room, the 4-6 grade classroom, and Judy's office to choose from. No agenda, we'll just talk about whatever comes up.

Pastoral Care Team and Alison offer Healing Circles The Healing Circles last approximately one hour and are led by the minister and members of the Pastoral Care Team. Vocal participation in the Healing Circles is invited, but not required. We expect your heart will participate regardless. Dates of the Healing Circles will be:

Monday, February 15, 2016, 7:00 - 8:00 P.M.

Friday, March 25, 2016, Noon - 1:00 P.M.

Monday, April 18, 7:00 - 8:00 P.M.

Friday, May 27, Noon - 1:00 P.M.

You do not need to sign up, but mark your calendars. If you will be needing child care please let our congregational administrator, **Judy Mitrolka**, know in advance at office@uusocietyamherst.org or at 413-253-2848.

Denominational Affairs

Thirty Days of Love is an annual celebration that runs approximately from Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in January through Valentine's Day in February. It is an opportunity to lift up the ways Unitarian Universalists and many of our partner organizations are building and organizing by taking bold, courageous action for intersectional racial justice.

Curated and Posted Weekly
www.SideWithLove.org & www.Facebook/SideOfLove

2021 WEEKLY THEMES

January 17 – 23
Living Our Values in the World

January 24 – 30
Hospitality and Inclusion

January 31 – February 6
Educating for Liberation

February 7 – 13
Restoration and Reparations

February 14
Side With Love Sunday

February 15
Assessment and Learning

30 DAYS OF LOVE

Love is asking us to **live our values**, be **hospitable and inclusive**, **educate for liberation**, **restore and repair**, and, most importantly, to **Side with Love**.

How do we do these things?

Each week we will hear from activists, artists, and authors who will share their thoughts. **YOU** can also pick your own adventure with weekly offerings for you to click and participate in. Let's keep learning together.

Curated and Posted Weekly
www.SideWithLove.org & www.Facebook/SideOfLove