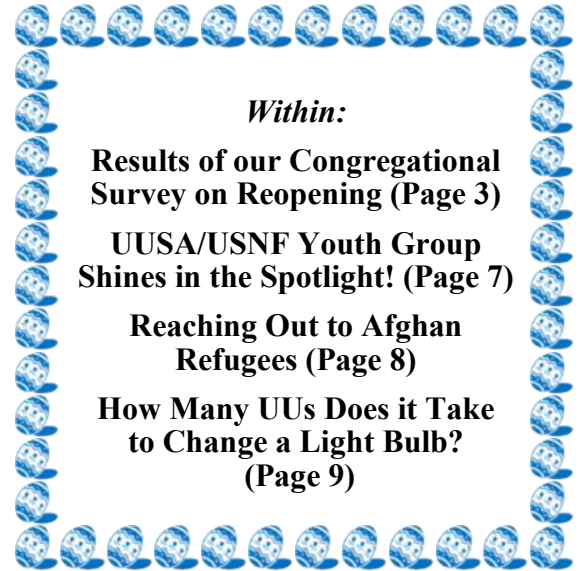


THE AMHERST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST NEWSLETTER

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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



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Important Information

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[link to board minutes](#)

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NEWSLETTER

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Janis Gray

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John Foster

Deadline for submissions: 20th of each month.

Email them to Janis Gray (contact Lea in the office if you need her email address).

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

This month, we hope to once more offer “hybrid” services (both online and in person). To join any service online, click <https://bit.ly/3bDuwv3> Meeting ID: 988 1332 2308 Passcode: 866951 Or call in +1 646 876 9923 and enter Meeting ID: 988 1332 2308.

If you haven't registered to attend a given service in person and would like to do so, please register [here](#).

Sunday, April 3, 10:30 A.M. – *Turning the Titanic in Time*

Darcy DuMont

Darcy DuMont, today's speaker and a member of our UU Society's Green Sanctuary Committee, writes, “We are getting more and more dire warnings about climate disruption. Last month we learned that we have a rapidly narrowing window to act before we reach a dangerous tipping point. What does it mean to shift our consciousness to the ‘new normal’ and what can we do as individuals and collectively to accelerate and scale up our action to meet the challenge?”

Lauren Fernandez, a representative from the Conservation Law Foundation's Zero Waste Project, recipient of our April Dedicated Offerings, will also speak to us today.



Do you know we have a UUSA YouTube Channel?

Original content from our Sunday services is now uploaded to our website, uusocietyamherst.org, with optional closed captioning! To view them, click [here](#) — and don't forget to **SUBSCRIBE!**

Dedicated Offerings

Our Unitarian Universalist Society devotes each month to a new Dedicated Offering (DO) recipient whose representative speaks to us on the first Sunday. We split every Sunday's offering plate 50/50 with the recipient organization. This move symbolizes the solidarity we feel with the organizations we choose to support, and it gives us all more opportunities to contribute. As always, please specify whether the funds you send to the office or by PayPal are for the plate, your pledge, or some other purpose.

First, a update: Our January collection for **Catholic Charities** raised \$1,112, more than the \$1,000 previously reported! In February, we raised \$600 for **80 Acres**. We will report in a future newsletter what we collected in March for the **New England Learning Center for Women in Transition (NELCWIT)**.

The **April Dedicated Offerings** will be for the **Conservation Law Foundation (CLF) Zero Waste Project**. The CLF has launched the Zero Waste Project to protect New England communities from the dangers posed by unsustainable waste management practices. We know that landfills and waste incinerators pose a threat to our health, our communities, and our environment. Safer, healthier alternatives exist, and we owe it to our families to put them into practice across the region.

Through the Zero Waste Project, CLF is raising awareness about the negative health and environmental impacts of our trash. We want to change the way New England deals with waste. That means moving from our current, unsustainable model to a “Zero Waste” approach that minimizes the amount of trash sent to landfills and incinerators.

Communities around the world, including Nantucket, Seattle, and San Francisco, are adopting zero waste strategies. These communities are finding new ways to “reduce, reuse, and recycle” as well as encouraging redesign of materials and manufacturing methods. CLF’s Zero Waste Project will work to address the solid waste problem throughout New England and help to protect our air and water from unnecessary, damaging pollutants.

Lauren Fernandez will join us on April 3 to tell us more about this initiative. Based in Boston, she is the Zero Waste Policy Analyst with the CLF project. She writes, “We shift the narrative from individual responsibility to producer responsibility and hold big producers like Coca-Cola responsible for the waste they make through creating good waste and recycling policies. The more we reduce our waste and improve recycling and compost systems, the less dependent we are on landfills and incinerators, which always disproportionately impact low-income and/or Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color. You can learn more about zero waste at Conservation Law Foundation here: <https://www.clf.org/making-an-impact/zero-waste/>.”

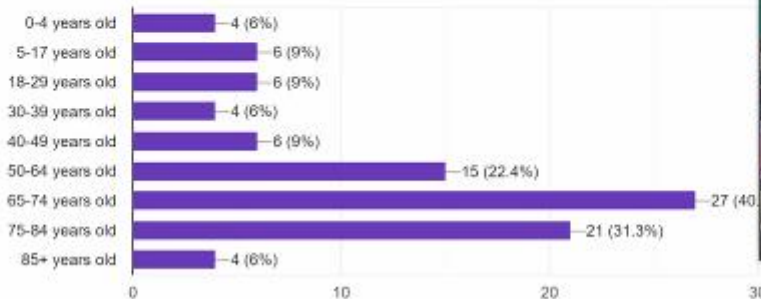
Report on Our Congregational Conversation about Reopening

*The screenshots below and on page 5 are among the many slides shared during our online Special Congregational Meeting on March 13, 2022. The meeting included a presentation of the results of our survey and a discussion about reopening our meetinghouse. The following are the draft minutes of this portion of the meeting as recorded by Board Clerk **Louise Grosslein**:*

Rev. Rachael opened the conversation by presenting results of the recent survey about reopening, which was filled out by 67 of us.

We skew older, but all ages are represented.

I and people in my household are in the following age categories (check all that apply)
67 responses



94% of us are vaccinated and boosted. One person is not vaccinated. A few are vaccinated but not boosted. There are some families with unvaccinated children. Eight responders are immunocompromised. UUSA vaccination: 89% boosted vs. 40% boosted in our county.

During the pandemic, we have participated [online] in Sunday Services or watched it later on our YouTube channel. We have also used [the online platform] to attend services presented by other congregations and organizations. We have used [the online platform] for committee meetings, small groups, book discussions,

membership conversations and have visited the UUSA Facebook page.

When we had in-person services, younger people were more likely to attend. Outdoor in-person events were popular. We had higher participation rates for outdoor in-person events than for the in-person services in the Sanctuary last fall.

The congregation is very comfortable with the idea of attending services with N95, KN95 and KF94 masks and less comfortable with no masks or informal masks.

Most of us know how to get tested. **Gene Herman** can help anyone who does not know how to get tested.

Singing: Some of us are really ready to sing in person and some are not. We know that singing is more likely to spread virus particles.

- 54% would attend an in-person service if there was a masked soloist
- 62% would attend with a masked small ensemble
- 49% would attend with a masked choir
- Less than half of would attend if singers were not masked.
- 43% are willing to have the congregation singing with masks
- About half of the choir is ready to sing.
- 15% are not ready to be in a service with anyone singing and 19% are more likely to participate online if there is singing.

Ventilation: An engineer's report showed that our ventilation is not up to code and does not provide significant indoor air cleaning. Repairs would be very expensive, costing 10's of thousands of dollars. We are still working on getting estimates for the repairs. The Meetinghouse committee is pursuing fixes that don't require too much cash. There is no public health violation by not being up to code. Most buildings that all of us go into probably don't meet ventilation codes either and buildings typically pass inspection without having the ventilation systems tested.

There is no clear standard for good ventilation right now. It is not even clear how much the ventilation would improve if we did the recommended repairs from the engineer's report. The very best covid protection (once vaccinated and boosted) is to wear an N95 mask. We could open windows and bring in outside air, which is the cheapest way to improve air quality, but it might not be comfortable, depending on the outside air temperature. We have purchased 3 free-standing HEPA air purifiers that would probably be used in RE. We could buy more air purifiers and run them in the Sanctuary, too. They clean the air, whereas bringing in more outside air is a way to dilute any particles that are in the air.

Ventilation mitigation in the immediate future:

- Opening windows – more than half of respondents are willing to attend those services
- HEPA filter units – more than half of respondents are willing to attend those services
- 14% of people will wait until covid subsides regardless of ventilation
- 18% of respondents are not concerned about ventilation

Capacity restrictions:

- 30% are not concerned about capacity
- 28% would attend if we had reduced capacity
- 35% would attend with reduced capacity and social distancing
- 7.5% are not ready to attend regardless of capacity

Craig's Doors: The people in the shelter are not required to be vaccinated, by Federal rules, and many of the guests are not vaccinated.

- 43% are comfortable attending with Craig's Doors in the social hall
- 22% are comfortable only if Craig's Doors is off-site on Sunday morning
- 28% will wait to attend in-person until Craig's Doors closes before attending in-person services
- About 8% aren't ready to attend anyway

Craig's Doors is using our foyer right now. We would check in for services at the old front door. We could make sure that someone who needs the ramp could use it.

Covid level that people are comfortable with (using the CovidActNow website):

- Low: 61%
- Medium: 58%
- High: 24%

- Very high: 6%
- Any risk level: 10%
- No risk level: 3%

Note: CovidActNow is going to adjust their metrics to reflect the CDC's new metrics. When they do, we will adjust ours, too.

Multiplatform services that were held in October and November:

People attending in the Sanctuary said the services were meaningful, joyful, they felt connected and included. They were easy to follow, and not too crowded. Some said they wished more had attended.

People attending [online] said the services were meaningful and joyful. They felt included and connected and said it was easy to access the [online] services. There were more negative responses about [online] services, but not that many and nobody felt excluded or uncomfortable.

Most important things people thought we should consider as we prepare for the next in-person services:

1. Keeping online quality high, too (27%)
2. Requiring high-quality masks (24%)
3. Requiring vaccination (18%)
4. Improving ventilation (9%)
5. NOT singing (7.3%)
6. Singing (5.5%)

We are ready to go back to multi-platform services next Sunday [March 20]. Everything has some level of risk. What level are we willing to bear together and what mitigation will help us bear that level of risk?

Congregational discussion:

There has been a great deal of work by the Board to think about ventilation. He is really excited about how to create multi-platform services that will work for everyone, as they will continue to be useful for the elderly, people on vacation, students who are away etc.

Ron Grosslein volunteered to bring fans from home to the Sanctuary which should be pretty effective at diluting particles, though we would have to decide how cool we would let it be. Other churches have provided or encouraged people to bring blankets. We could buy another air purifier (\$750 each) or build some with air filters and duct tape. **Carolyn Holstein** is willing to donate her HEPA air purifier for the next few months. She has a really good one. In the summer, when we really need the AC on, we run the air purifiers.

This coming Sunday RE will not be meeting at the same time as the Sunday Service so perhaps the other 2 HEPA air purifiers could be in the Sanctuary. RE will offer childcare and might need 1 or 2 air purifiers, depending on how many kids come. If they need a second room, they would need a second air purifier.

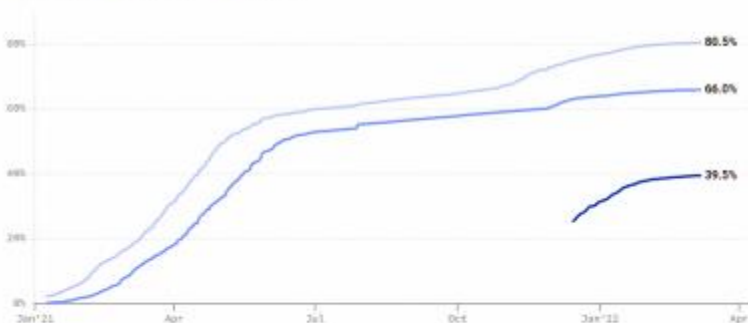
Craig's Doors guests will be at UUSA until May 1.

(continued on next page)

Vaccination in Hampshire County

% Vaccinated

1+ DOSE 2+ DOSES OR J&J BOOSTER SHOT
 80.5% 66.0% 39.5%



In Hampshire County, Massachusetts, 129,407 people (80.5%) have received at least one dose, 106,081 (66.0%) have received at least two doses or a single Johnson & Johnson dose, and 63,528 (39.5%) have received a booster shot. Anybody who is at least 5 years old is eligible to be vaccinated. Fewer than

Our rough vaccination rate is higher than Hampshire County at large.

We are 89% boosted.

We are 94% fully vaccinated.

Most of our unvaccinated people are under 5 and will be vaccinated when eligible.

Rev. Rachael asked for thumbs up or thumbs down about returning to in-person services and it looked like some people are excited about returning to in-person services and some are not. She reminded us that we are finding our way together and everything continues to shift.

A member who said she was unlikely to attend in person said that CovidActNow reported 236 cases/100,000 during the surge in January and now we're at 16. She thinks it's time to try being together again. Someone else said that we have members who haven't joined us on zoom and may not be feeling connected. Maybe in-person services would help. Also, we could gather outdoors as the weather warms up.

Rev. Rachael concluded by saying it is likely that we will be doing some fundraising for ventilation and other building repairs. We need to stay in active conversation and consent about all of this.

Social Events

The Women's Circle is a supportive and social group of UUSA women and open to all. Our next (possibly "hybrid") meeting will be on Thursday, April 14 at noon. Please contact **Sophie Rogers** for more information, or to get on the email distribution list. If you do not have access to our UUSA directory (with Sophie's contact information), please contact **Lea** in the office.

Weekly Men's Breakfast The Wednesday morning Men's Breakfast held at Kelly's has been on hold since the arrival of the COVID-19 variant in Amherst. With cases dropping, we hear the men may resume these popular breakfasts, but as of press time, a decision has not been made. **Pete Rogers** will know of any updates! If you do not have access to our UUSA directory (with Pete's contact information), please contact **Lea** in the office.

Religious Education Ministry



Perhaps some of you have noticed an absence of RE articles. It is not because I have nothing to say, but more because it seems that every time I say something, I need to change the plan! RE has been online for more than three months and before that we were outside at a playground. When we were outside, we had up to 14 children participating! Online our average was more around eight. Thankfully our Covid numbers are low and our vaccination rates are high, so we are now back in the UUSA building. As you perhaps can imagine, most of our children do not remember the space. On March 20, we started RE in the sanctuary with Rev. Rachael.

As we gathered together to look at the Angel window, the pews and the chalice, a 5th grader announced that "the room seemed a lot smaller" than he remembered it. This is probably because he is a foot taller? The twins who were born right after lock down are now running around playing in the preschool! Six of **Jacy's** preschoolers are working on their preschool graduation packets because they will be rising kindergarteners in June. Time is a funny thing. Even when it seems like everything has stopped, our children keep growing, learning and changing quickly.

RE's exciting news is that we are planning to start the [Our Whole Lives](#) program for K-3 and 4-7th graders in April. The program will run through June. All children who are not doing OWL are welcome to join Jacy and me for regular RE lessons.

Another exciting development is that RE programming has expanded! RE lessons are being held from 9:30-10:20 A.M. and childcare is being offered from 10:30-11:30 A.M. This allows the parents to have a small group session and also attend worship upstairs. It also means that the children in RE have the chance to experience a full RE class, attend *Time for All Ages* upstairs and have free social



Rev. Rachael (left) and DRE Rebecca Fricke (right) join some of our RE students during Time for All Ages in the sanctuary on March 20. Photo by Anne Perkins.

time with their UU friends during childcare.

My fingers and toes are crossed (a UU prayer ritual?) that all of these plans can remain in place, but if they can not, then we will pivot again. Thank you for all of your support.

YoUUrs,

Rebecca Fricke

Director of Religious Education

Youth Group Youth Group has been meeting in-person every weekend at the Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence over the past month. We were busy planning our youth service on March 27 and have also been cooking for the Interfaith Cot Shelter. *(At right: chicken cacciatore and roasted vegetables we prepared for the shelter's guests!)*

As the weather continues to get nicer and COVID rates decrease, we are looking forward to spending more time outside and at the Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst in the upcoming months. Keep an eye out on the Youth Group calendar and on your inbox for updates on meeting locations in April.



Young Adults: The Young Adults have been meeting online on Second Sundays from 5:00-6:30 P.M. We have been playing drawing games and catching up on life. We will start meeting outside together again as the weather gets warmer and COVID-19 rates decrease. Our next meeting will be on April 10 from 5:00-6:30 P.M. at Mt. Tom Reservation in Holyoke. Hope to see you there! If you need a ride, you can contact Youth and Young Adult Coordinator **Johnny Williams** at youthandya@uusocietyamherst.org

At left: Sarah Brau of UUSA offered a Musical Interlude during the March 27 Youth Sunday service at the Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence (USNF). Below: UUSA's Anne Louise White (on piano) accompanied the UUSA/USNF Youth Group (l-r: Madeleine, Grace, Cameron, Eleanor and Sarah) as they sang their postlude, "9 to 5." They received a standing ovation!



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/>

Fundraising

The Service Auction originally planned for May has been cancelled due to the uncertainties that remain around Covid-19. We hope to offer some other events online. Stay tuned!

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee will meet on Monday, April 11, online at 7:15 P.M.

Social Action



UUSA members reach out to Afghan refugees In early March, a Catholic Charities' Circle of Care team consisting of **Anne Louise White**, **Gabriela Horvay**, **Bob Berwick**, **Sue Kelsey**, and Barbara Neulinger, another local volunteer, began working with three Afghan refugees who traveled to the US in late fall 2021 and were housed in Holyoke House in December and January. Reports **Sue**, "The goal of our Circle is to help the men become as independent as possible and provide friendship for them. We moved the men into their new apartment in

downtown Springfield. "We have been spending our weeks taking them to the Mosque in West Springfield, food pantries and nearby grocery stores, doctor and dentist appointments, English classes, and resume writing sessions. The men know very little English, and we were fortunate to find an interpreter at UMass to help us communicate with them.

"The men are grateful to be here. They miss their families back in Afghanistan and desperately want jobs so they can afford to send their families here. Each day is a new chapter in our lives and their lives and a humbling experience, as we work hard to acclimate them to life in western Massachusetts."

Interfaith Cot Shelter help needed April 7! On March 3, some 28 homeless people staying at the Interfaith Shelter, First Churches in Northampton were served another homemade meal by members of UUSA. **Mary Latham** and **María Lydia Spinelli** prepared special macaroni and cheese with sausage (YUM) and green beans. **Chas Stevenson** delivered it, providing also a dessert.

We have one more meal to go in April, and then we start again in November. **Sue Kelsey** signed up for the April 7 main dish. We still need Vegetable/Salad, juice, bread and dessert. **Maria Lydia** will deliver from So. Hadley. Any questions please call or email **Maria Lydia** — if you do not have access to our UUSA directory for ways to reach her, please contact **Lea** in the office.

Not Bread Alone (NBA) also needs UUSA! On April 30, UUs are needed at NBA, the soup kitchen at First Congregational Church in Amherst, to prepare and serve multi-course boxed lunches to our neighbors. Cooks are needed from 9:30 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.; Packers 11:30 A.M. - 12:30 P.M.; Servers 11:45 A.M. - 1:30 P.M. Covid precautions are followed with sign-in and temperature recording required. Every week brings different food to create new dishes. Come and join the fun! NBA is located in the lower rear of the church with access off Spring St. If you can help please email **Mary Beth Seminario**. THANK YOU!! (If you do not have access to our UUSA directory with her email address, please contact **Lea** in the office.)

ION Corner

The March 11 bell ringing for the "11th hour for the earth" took place at the Jewish Community Center of Amherst (JCA). Although the JCA lacks a bell, much noise/music was made by other instruments and improvisations during the 11-minute gathering.

Submitted by **Mary Beth Seminario**, UUSA representative to ION, the Interfaith Opportunities Network.

How many Unitarian Universalists does it take to change a light bulb?

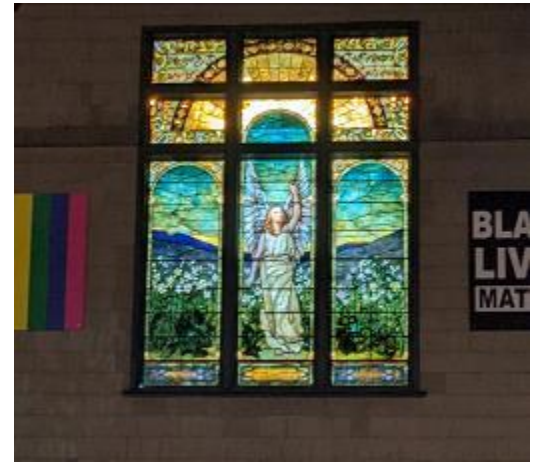
One common response for this joke: We choose not to make a statement either in favor of or against the need for a light bulb. However, if in your own journey, you have found that light bulbs work for you, that is wonderful. You are invited to write a poem or compose a modern dance about your personal relationship with your light bulb. Present it next month at our annual Light Bulb Sunday Service, in which we will explore a number of light bulb traditions, including incandescent, fluorescent, 3-way, long-life, and tinted, all of which are equally valid paths to luminescence.

Our uncommon response: Just one, if it's Ron!



As you may recall from our last newsletter, for many months the spotlights aimed at our Tiffany window from inside the sanctuary were not functioning. But in his dauntless quest to remove and replace the eight burned-out LEDs set high on the ceiling, **Ron Grosslein** successfully fashioned a new

tool. In March, Ron realized he had to create yet *another* tool (shown above) to aim the new bulbs properly once the first tool screwed them back into their cans. In March, he successfully completed his task! Our stained glass treasure is once again illuminated at night to the delight of passersby. Thank you, Ron!



(Photos by Louise and Ron Grosslein)

Our Caring Ministries



What we need to do most is to
Hear within ourselves the
Sound of the earth crying.

Thich Nhat Hanh

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

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

Our hearts go out to the brave people of Ukraine as they fight for their lives and their freedom, and to any of you struggling with illness, loneliness, or grief. Please remember that you are part of the web of life that sustains us all and gives us something to hang on to in difficult times.

In Memoriam Wesley Mason Olds

January 23, 1933—March 11, 2022

Wesley Mason Olds, a former minister of our congregation, passed away of cardiac failure on March 11 after his daily walk. Mason, as he preferred to be known, grew up in Cordele, GA, received an undergraduate degree from Mercer University, a BD from Colgate-Rochester Divinity School and a Ph.D. from Brown. In 1964 he participated in the March on Washington. He was minister of our UU Society from 1965-1966. Mason went on to be a professor of Religion and Philosophy at Springfield College (1966-1996); he also taught at Smith and Mount Holyoke. Mason retired to Highlands, NC, then Johns Island, SC, where he taught at the Citadel and College of Charleston. He edited the journal *Religious Humanism* in the 1990s, published a number of academic books and articles, and wrote fiction for pleasure. In 2019 he returned to Amherst MA, where he and his wife Marjorie attended many services at the meetinghouse where he had once served.

In addition to his wife of 63 years, Mason is survived by daughter Catherine, son D. Mason and grandson Cameron, as well as two sisters, Kaye Tolbert and Ann Matthews. In lieu of flowers, gifts may be made to: College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Mercer University, 1501 Mercer University Drive, Macon, GA 31207 or <https://www.mercer.edu/give/>

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 April newsletters from 25 and 15 years ago:

April 1997

Food Collection for the Amherst Survival Center Despite cold and snow, members and friends of our Society volunteered at four area supermarkets March 7 and 8 to carry out the Interfaith Service Council of Amherst-sponsored monthly food drive for the Amherst Survival Center — and collected one ton of food and \$475 in cash.

The collectors were **Harry Allen, Florence Bert, Debby Davis, Nancy Foster, Marilyn Gonter, Janis Gray, Jim Hayes, Barbara and Tom Henderson, Carolyn Holstein, Marjorie Karlson, Maureen Kirk, Charlotte Kitowski, Marianne Lorenzelli, Kathy McCue, Lisa Musante and Tamaia Bartmon, Tom Pelletier, Ruth Pratt, Howard and Luba Reep, Paul Rothery, Dick and Jan Stevens, and Naomi Yanis.** Drivers transporting the food to the Center were **Perry Conley, Betsey and Chad Johnson,** and Vangie Westcott, the Center's director. According to Vangie, the tangible product of our volunteer efforts should enable the Center to put together 100 boxes of food to be given to needy families.

Chad Johnson

April 2007

April Activities in RE Why do we have a Seder in Religious Education and find treats at Easter? As Unitarian Universalists, we believe in the seven principles and draw our sources from many places, including Jewish and Christian teachings as well as other religions of the world. The winter and spring holidays are great introductions to the roots of our beliefs to our children. In RE we have a Seder, talk about Easter (and usually search for treats), and celebrate Earth Day every Spring. These times have become a part of our liturgical calendar. We have made it part of our (our = here at the UUSA) Unitarian Universalist heritage.

Individual families also take celebrations from other religions and make them part of their own ritual, whether it be Solstice, Christmas, Easter or Passover. It is important for our children to know the history and roots of these celebrations and what makes them important to us. We can use these holidays to talk with our children about the teachings of other religions. The more we talk about our sources, the more our children will understand what being a Unitarian Universalist is and hopefully the less they will be confused when celebrating and learning about other religions.

Maria Racca [DRE]