

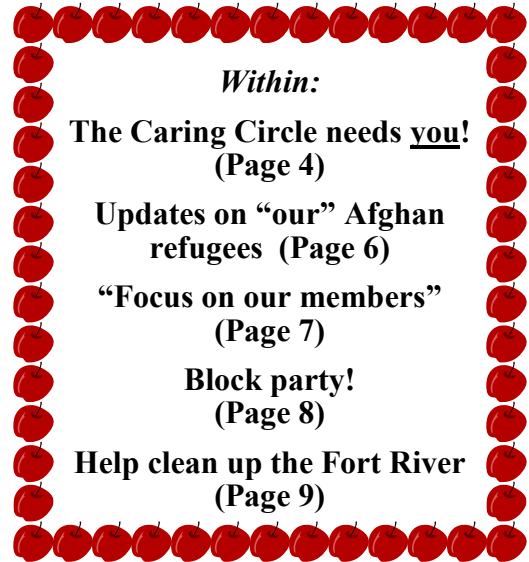
THE AMHERST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST NEWSLETTER

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

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September 2022



Important Information

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Office Hours: Wednesday 9:30 A.M. - 4:30 P.M.,

Sunday 10:00—Noon, evenings as requested

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DIRECTOR OF MUSIC:

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[link to board minutes](#)

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NEWSLETTER

Copy Editor:

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

Over the summer, many of us have attended UU services across the country as virtual guests. **Our own “hybrid services” (live, in-person and livestreamed online) will resume in Amherst on September 11.** To join any of our services 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.

Sunday, September 4, 10:30 A.M. – *Labor Day: The Music that Shaped the Movement*

The Rev. Caitlin Cotter Coillberg

This morning we are invited to be virtual guests at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Silver Spring, MD. We will celebrate workers, remember the gains and sacrifices of the Labor Movement, and recommit ourselves to building a world where all people have enough regardless of their productivity. A slideshow begins at 10:25 a.m., and worship at 10:30 a.m. To join this service, click <https://uucss.org/zoom4>

Sunday, September 11, 10:30 A.M. – *Water Ritual: Sources of Our Living Tradition*

The Rev. Rachael Hayes

Bring a small amount of water from a place in your life to pour in our water ritual during our multigenerational service. Those attending online are welcome to come pour water in our sanctuary on 9/10 or pour water wherever you are!

Sunday, September 18, 10:30 A.M. – *Preparing for Wonder: Blessing of the Backpacks*

The Rev. Rachael Hayes

Bring your backpacks!


Judith Fonsh and another member of Hands Across the Hills will also speak today about September’s Dedicated Offering.

Sunday, September 28, 10:30 A.M. – *Truth to Power*

The Rev. Rachael Hayes

Do you know we have a UUSA YouTube Channel?

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



*Proposed Congregational Covenant, adopted at
Annual Meeting, June 2022, for one year of study:*

**Love is the spirit of this community,
And service its practice.
This is our great covenant:
To dwell together in peace,
To seek truth and justice in love,
And to work toward the time and place
where everyone's worth and dignity
is honored by all
in our world’s Beloved Community.**

Dedicated Offerings

From September through June, we donate half of our collection to a worthy organization whose work aligns with UUSA Principles. Recipients are suggested by both individuals and committees of our UU Society.

The Dedicated Offering (DO) for September will be for **Letcher County in eastern Kentucky**. It has been devastated by flooding more than once this summer. The residents of the county are the other half of Leverett's "Hands Across the Hills" group, formed after the 2016 election. Several of the Kentucky colleagues are deeply involved in creating and managing the Cowan Community Center, which has been distributing relief funds. Funds will be used for such things as lodging, food and necessities to those displaced by the floods.

Carpentry and restoration of the homes destroyed are also being addressed.

Judith Fonsh and another member of Hands Across the Hills will speak to us during our service on Sunday, September 18.

A Message from the Co-Presidents

In recognition that Reverend Rachael has extended herself above and beyond reasonable work expectations over the past few years due to the COVID pandemic, the members of the Board of Trustees have encouraged her to commit to working toward a more balanced and healthy work life. Further, the Board has made a commitment to support her toward this necessary objective.

Specifically, we have encouraged Reverend Rachael not to attend quite as many committee meetings of the congregation and to limit her personal meetings to a few days a week. This will allow our minister to focus on providing spiritual and emotional leadership. Our committees are competent and capable. We have excellent leadership and creative committee members throughout the congregation who know what is needed to make sure the UUSA remains vibrant and healthy. We can function effectively as a community without our minister's personal and active involvement in the regular work of our committees.

At the same time, we believe that the limitations created by the pandemic have disrupted the regular work of some of our committees. We are in the process of creating a new departmental structure which we believe will help clarify the roles of our committees and improve communication among our leaders. We hope you will be patient, supportive, and creative as we figure out together how to work in a new COVID restricted world.

In Community,

John Gerber and Anne Moore

Religious Education Ministry



We begin a new year with a new Director of Religious Education! Andrew Coate is relatively new to Western Massachusetts. He and his partner Sarah moved here in the spring of 2020 with their children, Alexa and Julian, and in 2021 they welcomed their third child, Linden. Prior to moving, Andrew served as the Director of Religious Education at the First Church Jamaica Plain, Unitarian Universalist in Boston for 4 years after graduating from seminary at the Boston University School of Theology. In the 2018/2019 year he served as the ministerial intern at First Unitarian Church of Worcester.

Religious Education classes start on September 11, in just a couple short weeks. We are excited that we will be meeting in person in the meetnghouse. We will resume holding RE during service. Children 3 and under are welcome to join **Jacy** downstairs before service starts, or stay with their parents or guardians for the first part of service and come downstairs with the older children after the Time for All Ages.

Please follow this link to fill out our the updated RE registration form: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfESzU3muzKUdBOX1_qLFOUox1CdaynMXaiQAeWkuGtmzENFw/viewform

Feel free to contact Andrew with any questions. His office hours are Wednesdays 9:30 A.M.—4:30 P.M. and Sundays 10:00 A.M. -12:00 P.M. He is available evenings as requested.

In Memoriam

John McLean

John McLean (1932-2022), beloved father and grandfather, husband, brother, and friend, passed away on July 20, 2022. He attended services at the UUSA with his daughter **Debbie McClean** and always felt comfortable and welcome amidst the congregation; he also enjoyed the Men's Breakfast group.

According to his obituary, "he was a baker, (crafty) donut maker, competitive tennis player, runner, rock collector, dog lover, environmental activist, and asparagus farmer. He will be remembered by many as the doctor for the Peoria Manual high school football team through the 1980-90s, where his girls all attended, in the fall appearing weekly on the sideline in his old floppy army hat, he and the hat known as a good luck charm to the players." To read about his life in full, please click [here](#).

His Celebration of Life service will be held at 1:00 P.M. on September 17, 2022 at the Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst, MA. In lieu of flowers, please consider donation to the [Alzheimer's Association](#), Hospice Fisher Home of Amherst, MA, or any community organization doing important work for people that need it.

Betsy G. Neisner

Betsy G. Neisner, former UUSA Member and Executive Director of Cancer Connection from 2008-2016, died on August 13. To read a letter from that organization about her life, visit [here](#).

Betty Romer

Betty Romer, longtime friend of the UUSA and beloved wife of **Robert Romer**, died peacefully in her sleep during the week of August 15. The family is planning a celebration of her life on Saturday, October 29 at the UUSA.

A Need for Volunteers



The Caring Circle (see Our Caring Ministries column, below) is the support network for both UUSA members and good friends of UU. From time to time, there is a temporary need for assistance — and a meal or a ride are at the top of the list. We invite you to be a helper and volunteer to bring a meal or . . . drive someone who needs a ride to a doctor, etc.



Please let **Catharine Porter** know that you are interested and your name will be added to our volunteer list. If you do not have access to our UUSA directory (with Catharine's contact information), please contact **Lea** in the office.

Our Caring Ministries



"And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."

— Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

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, Sophie Hermann, 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.

If you are lonely, grieving, or ill, know that we hold you in our hearts. You are not alone. Let us do our part in this world, where the war wears on in Ukraine, climate change is a stark reality, and there is so much suffering. Everyone has something to contribute.

Social Events

The Women's Circle is a supportive and social group of UUSA women and open to all. We are currently meeting at noon on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month, sometimes in person, sometimes online. Please contact **Sophie Rogers** for more information, or to get on her email distribution list. If you do not have access to our UUSA directory (with Sophie's contact information), please contact **Lea** in the office.

The Men's Breakfast is a no-agenda group that meets each Wednesday at 7:00 A.M. at Kelly's Restaurant on Route 9 in Amherst. Please contact **Pete Rogers** for more information. If you do not have access to our UUSA directory (with Pete's contact information), please contact **Lea** in the office.

The Return of the Pancake Breakfast! On July 31, about 30 people (cooks included) turned out to enjoy our first summer congregational pancake breakfast in our Social Hall in far too long! Many thanks to **John Gerber** for sharing the photos below with us.





It's now been more than a year since Afghanistan's capital city of Kabul was captured by the Taliban.

In January 2022, UUSA members and friends contributed generously to a Dedicated Offering for the Catholic Charities Agency of Springfield, MA, which had begun placing Afghan refugees in the Pioneer Valley. In addition, a number of Amherst UUs began volunteering in two of that organization's Circles of Care to help the new arrivals. In late August, we asked both teams to let us know how their ministries were going.

1. In early March, a group consisting of UUSA's **Anne Louise White, Gabriela Horvay, Bob Berwick, Sue Kelsey**, and a fifth (non-UU) volunteer began working with three Afghan men who had traveled to the U.S. in late fall 2021 and were housed in Holyoke House. This team helped them move into an apartment in Springfield. Writes **Gabriela**:

Half a year later, one of the three men, who'd gotten a good job as a machinist, left and moved to be with extended family in Virginia. Another man who'd been moved out of Holyoke House and then moved to Chicopee was moved in with our guys. He was with our guys for perhaps three weeks. Even though 8-9 months had passed since he'd left the military base where he'd first landed, he still hadn't gotten his work authorization. Once he finally did, he moved to Nebraska to be with a friend. Another man, who'd been placed in Greenfield, was moved into the Springfield apartment when one of the Greenfield roommates left for a job in Kansas (!). This new Springfield roommate turns out to have been a neighbor of one of the other roommates back in Afghanistan. So there's been a lot of movement!

All three men are working, two of them having just started work. The papers of one of the two are MIA in DC, so it has been, and continues to be, especially bumpy for him. Two of the men have been taking English Zoom classes; the third works during the times the Zooms are scheduled and so is unable to attend. Mountain View CSA in Easthampton has donated a farm share to the guys, so in addition to the pantry runs, we make weekly runs to the farm. The guys are strictly meat and rice guys, so they don't benefit much from the greens at the CSA, but they love the tomatoes and melons. **Anne Louise** just recently set up a clothesline for them and bought them stuff to make their cleaning easier. The three guys are very different: one is gregarious and extroverted; one is shy, and a homebody; one is eager and full of pluck. They all miss their families enormously. None of them wants to spend money on themselves — for clothes, etc. — it all goes back to their families in Afghanistan.

Our circle of care (volunteers) has gained three new members, one of whom was inactive right out of the gate. (Maybe she's still behind the gate.) The other two are eager, helpful participants.

We've made a lot of progress. The guys feel at home.

2. **Jeanne Ballantine**, meanwhile, has been working with an Afghan family with children. Jeanne writes:

Hard to imagine being totally uprooted from all that is familiar—the food, the route to the grocery store or food market, the schools, the mosque, friends and family. Yet that is what has happened to millions of refugees. In the U.S. alone, over 68,000 Afghan refugees are being introduced to a new way of life, new expectations, new language. The majority have gone to California, Texas, and Virginia, but 46 states have taken in refugees. Western Massachusetts is now home to a number of families, and UUSA



Shamsia Hassani, an Afghan street artist, drew international attention for her work as war drove refugees from her native land.

members have been involved with resettlement of several families.

One of these is the Shirzad-Farquiri family—Father, Mother, and four kids (twins age 3, son age 7, and daughter age 10 when they arrived in Amherst last December). The 10-year-old had some English in school in Afghanistan, and she often serves the role as the family translator, a big responsibility for a very smart young woman!

Catholic Charities was the sponsoring organization for this family (Jewish Federation also serves this role for many families). They provided temporary housing for several families at Burnett House in Amherst, a Catholic Conference Center. Most families have moved to more permanent housing as it has become available. “Our” family now lives in an apartment complex near UMass. Fortunately, there is another Afghan family there (studying at UMass), and they provide friendship, encouragement, and some translation help.

The family is very grateful to be here and safe, but the transition is challenging. Right now, the parents are working on their English — most of us know how challenging it is to learn another language in adulthood. Papa has his driver’s license and a minimum wage job, though he was a professional in Afghanistan and owned a business with this father. Mom is working on her English, taking care of four children, learning to drive (having not driven before now); and creating lovely crafts for sale. **YOU CAN MEET FARZANA** (mother) and **HUSNIA** (10-year-old daughter and translator) at the far end of the Amherst Farmers’ Market on Saturdays from 9:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. in the craft section where Farzana’s Afghani Crafts are on display. Please support her if you can!!

The two older children started school last February and are settling in well. The now 4-year-old twins start Head Start soon. That will give Mom a break to focus on her English and other skills. She is an excellent cook and has made meals for our care group, and creates her crafts.

The family can always use more help with language training and other support. Most of that is coordinated through Catholic Charities.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee will meet on Monday, September 12, at 7:15 P.M. online.

Focus on Our Members

Jeanne Ballantine (JB) taught Sociology and Global Studies; **Hardy Ballantine** (HB) was the family homemaker, an educator and bookbinder. They live in Amherst and were interviewed by **Ellen Pile** (EP).

EP: What drew you to UU?

HB: I was raised Episcopalian.

JB: I was raised Presbyterian. That didn’t take too well.

HB: Episcopalian didn’t take too well either. I became a UU in 1973 when we moved to Yellow Springs OH.

JB: I think what attracted us to UU was like-minded people, meaning in terms of the way they were raising their kids and common interests. I liked the idea that I could belong to a religious group that gave us freedom to question and think about what we wanted to believe in. Our kids had a UU religious education so that they’re very tolerant of many kinds of people. For all of us it was a broadening experience realizing that you didn’t have to believe one way to be a good person or to be an educated person.

EP: Did it take you a while to feel you belonged at UUSA?

JB: It was the first thing we thought of when we came here; it’s the main source of the people we do things with. I think Hardy and I both consider ourselves UU’s. If you ask us about the spiritual element, I don’t want to speak for Hardy, but I think that is not the main draw for us. What we like is the freedom. It’s not some spiritual calling or something. It’s more that we can believe and be who we want to and be respected by the people around us.



Hardy and Jeanne Ballantine

EP: *Why a faith community? Could a social club do it?*

JB: What club is there where you can get into matters of life and death, of belief systems? I respect the fact that each person in our community might have a slightly different take on whether there is a God, whether there is some spiritual thing that moves them, whether they worship nature. That not only makes people interesting to talk with but it gives one the freedom to explore those ideas that other people bring because there's this wonderful group of "free thinkers," people who have permission to hold the views they want to hold. I think we've traveled and lived abroad a lot and you run into many viewpoints and types of people and practices, so instead of saying, "oh my god" as half of our nation is doing now, saying, "we don't want anybody different," it's enriching to meet people with different viewpoints. Can you add anything to that, Hardy?

HB: You did that very well.

EP: *All that creative energy and then what language do we use together? Church, meetinghouse, worship?*

HB: I don't like the words church or worship. In Yellow Springs there was a fellowship, meaning it was lay led. And I like the word meeting. "I'm going to meeting this morning."

EP: Each congregation may from time to time be working through its language.

JB: That's sort of the charm I think. I don't think very often about why UU or what does it do for me. I guess I feel myself a world citizen and there are so many different viewpoints and philosophies and the richness out there in the world; it's just fascinating to explore where other people are coming from. How did they get to be the way they are? What strictures are they operating under? And just being free to be able to look at that is to me a privilege. I think so many people have strictures they have to follow or they don't know not to follow. They're missing so much, including thinking outside the box!

(To Be Continued in October!)

Coming Soon in Our Larger Community



Green Sanctuary

Connecticut River Annual Source to Sea Clean Up Saturday, September 24



The UUSA has participated in the *Source to Sea Clean Up* for decades. This event, sponsored by the Connecticut River Conservancy, is a great way to be outside, near the water, and with friends doing good work. **For a look at the larger effort**, follow this link: <https://www.ctriver.org/our-work/source-to-sea-cleanup/>.

This year the Green Sanctuary Committee invites you to the 26th Annual Source to Sea Cleanup with the Fort River Watershed Association on Saturday, September 24, 9:00 A.M. at Groff Park. **To sign up go to <https://fortriver.org/cleanup/>**

We'll meet there on the day, and organize ourselves into group(s) that make sense at the time. Read the website, and come prepared for ticks, high water, drought — who knows? — and a good time!

For now, take a look at these scenes from some of UUSA's past Source to Sea clean up adventures!

For the curious : The Town of Amherst notes that the Fort and its tributaries (Muddy, Plum and Hop Brooks) form “the longest free-flowing tributary of

the Connecticut River in Massachusetts. Its watershed contains all the reservoirs for Amherst, and the origin of the river itself is the Atkins Reservoir. With heavily forested uplands and a relatively high degree of land protection in the watershed, water quality is sufficiently good that the Fort provides core habitat for native fish (including species of special concern such as bridled shiner), invertebrates such as the federally listed endangered dwarf wedgemussel, and at least four other state-listed mussels species.”



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 September newsletters from 25 and 15 years ago.

September 1997

Music Notes A happy welcome back to **Carolyn Holstein**, who is returning this fall after a year's leave of absence. She will be resuming her post as half-time organist. This is good news indeed, since we haven't heard the pedals on the organ for quite some time!

Social Justice Returning Democracy to the People To find out how this can be done by getting money out of politics, come to the large meeting room of The Jones Library on Wednesday, October 78, at 7:30 P.M. Randy Kehler, Rep. Ellen Story, and M. A. Swedlund will talk about the "Clean Election Option," which would take most private money out of Massachusetts election campaigns. Candidates who choose this option agree to accept only a small, limited amount of private money, and in return, receive funding for their entire campaigns.

This option, which is modeled on a law passed in Maine last year, is being proposed for candidates for Mass. State offices (state reps., state senators, governor, etc.), and will be on the ballot in November 1998 if enough signatures on a state-wide petition are obtained this fall. The October 8 meeting is sponsored by the Hampshire/Franklin Chapter of CPPAX (Citizens for Participation in Political Action). For more information, call **Chad Johnson**.

September 2007

Green Sanctuary UU Society of Amherst Awarded Certificate as a Green Sanctuary Congregation at the 46th Annual UUA General Assembly in Portland, Oregon.

Eve Posada was present to receive the certificate at the Plenary Session on June 23, 2007. Nine congregations had earned the certificate and six were represented at GA. Katherine Jesch, director of Environmental Ministry, gave a short introductory speech about the Green Sanctuary Program and then, in a matter of minutes, we each marched across the stage to receive our "diploma" (it felt like a graduation) as a picture we had chosen was flashed across the screen. Ours was a digital photo showing the UMass students pulling on a rope to haul up the rusty washing machine **Carolyn Cave** had dug out of the river at our Connecticut River Cleanup last year with **Ron** and **Louise Grosslein** cheering them on. We now have the framed certificate on view in the office, as well as several notebooks which document the activities we engaged in during the past three or more years to reach our goal.

Now that we have "graduated" and have become a Green Sanctuary Congregation, we are prepared to follow through on our commitments to earth stewardship. The Green Sanctuary Committee this year will continue the programs we have initiated, keep you informed of earth-related issues, and encourage a broader initiative and participation by the committees and individuals to carry on our mission.

