

THE AMHERST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST NEWSLETTER

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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



January 2024



Important Information

STREET ADDRESS:

121 North Pleasant Street, Amherst, MA 01002

MAILING ADDRESS:

P.O. Box 502, Amherst, MA 01004-0502

The following staff can be reached by email or by calling the office and leaving a message: 413-253-2848

MINISTER: The Reverend Rachael Hayes

revrachael@uusocietyamherst.org

CONGREGATIONAL ADMINISTRATOR:

Lea Douville office@uusocietyamherst.org

Office Hours: Tuesday - Friday 11:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.

DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:

Andrew Coate dre@uusocietyamherst.org

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

Sunday 10:00 - Noon, evenings as requested

YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT COORDINATOR:

Eden Richardson youthandya@uusocietyamherst.org

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC:

Brenda Miller music@uusocietyamherst.org

BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

board@uusocietyamherst.org

[link to board minutes](#)

Co-Presidents:

Jeff Clark and John Gerber

Clerk:

Ashley Carter

Treasurer:

Eric Murphy

Members At Large:

Linda Callahan

Sue Kelly

Deeya Pavelle

NEWSLETTER

Copy Editor:

Janis Gray

Calendar Creator:

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. Submissions may be edited to save space or to maintain a consistent style.

Thank you!

Printed on recycled paper



Schedule of Services

We encourage you to attend our Sunday services in person. *As of this writing*, masks may again be required, given a recent rise decline in COVID numbers in our area.* You may also attend online. Click <https://bit.ly/463gaOt> Meeting ID: 998 5370 0822 PW: 599092 Or call in +1 646 876 9923 and enter Meeting ID: 998 5370 0822.

*The UUSA Board of Trustees has voted unanimously to change the COVID-19 Building Use Policy to “mask optional” in most of the sanctuary when the risk level is low. A “mask required” area will be maintained on the balcony, next to the windows. Masks are always welcome. Our new policy depends on weekly tracking of wastewater using BioBot Analytics COVID-19 website. If wastewater tests remain below 1000 copies/mL in Hampshire County, the UUSA will remain in Low or Green risk level and continue as “mask optional.” If the risk level increases above that level, we will move to “mask required” or more stringent limits, if necessary. For details, please see the revised policy here: https://www.uusocietyamherst.org/covid_policy/

Sunday, January 7, 10:30 A.M. – *Delighted*
Robin Livingston

Sunday, January 14, 10:30 A.M. – *Title TBA*
The Rev. Rachael Hayes

Sunday, January 21, 10:30 A.M. – *Title TBA*
The Rev. Rachael Hayes and Carrie Baker

Sunday, January 28, 10:30 A.M. – *Title TBA*
The Rev. Rachael Hayes



Check out the 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!

Dedicated Offerings

From September to June, our Society donates each month to a dedicated offering recipient and splits 50/50 every Sunday's offering plate with the recipient organization. We will report in a future newsletter what we raised in November for the **Connecticut River Conservancy (CRC)**, and in December for **Etta International, Empowerment through the Arts**. In September we raised \$1,000 for **UUA Disaster Relief Fund** to support the Montpelier VT UU congregation, which suffered a great loss when the Connecticut river flooded its building, and \$1,175 for **Maui Strong** to support victims of the wildfires which devastated Lahaina in western Maui, Hawaii.

The Dedicated Offerings for the month of January will be for **Reproductive Equity Now**. This organization has been active for 50 years in Massachusetts to create change removing barriers to abortion and other types of reproductive health care. REN is engaged in local organizing and support of agencies such as Tapestry Health and the Abortion Rights Fund of Western Massachusetts. For more information on REN, please look at their website - <https://reproequitynow.org/massachusetts> A representative from REN will speak at the January 7 service.

On Sunday, January 21, the UUSA Reproductive Justice Action Group is pleased to have Carrie Baker as the speaker. Baker is an activist, journalist, and professor of American Studies at Smith College. She is a regular editorial contributor to the *Daily Hampshire Gazette*. <https://www.gazettenet.com/Columnist-Carrie-Baker-53489855>

More about our Dedicated Offering Committee

The Dedicated Offering Committee selects non-profit organizations that our Society will support with donations from our Sunday collections. We solicit UUSA's members for names of organizations through a form which is available in the office and on-line at <https://forms.gle/hypMGzMJHgeAVf26>. A representative of the chosen organization is asked to speak about it on the first Sunday of the month. We welcome new members. If you are interested in learning more or joining DOC, please contact **Anne Perkins, Mary Beth Seminario, Linda Callahan, Carolyn Holstein, Linda Honan** or **Brenda Bushouse**.

Feedback Wanted by the Board of Trustees

The UUSA Board of Trustees would like to hear from you about your thoughts on the leadership, management, and general governance of the UUSA. Governance is a shared responsibility of the Minister, the Board of Trustees, and the many committees, ministries, groups, circles, and teams of the congregation. Please share your thoughts and suggestions using this "[digital suggestion box](#)" (an email).

Our Congregational Administrator will forward your feedback to the Minister, Board of Trustees, and/or committee leader, as appropriate. Members of the Board will also be available during the coffee hour after the services to hear your thoughts. In addition, you are invited to speak directly to the Board at our next meeting. To be included on the board meeting agenda, please contact either of the co-presidents. We'd like to hear from you!

How to Access a UUSA Directory

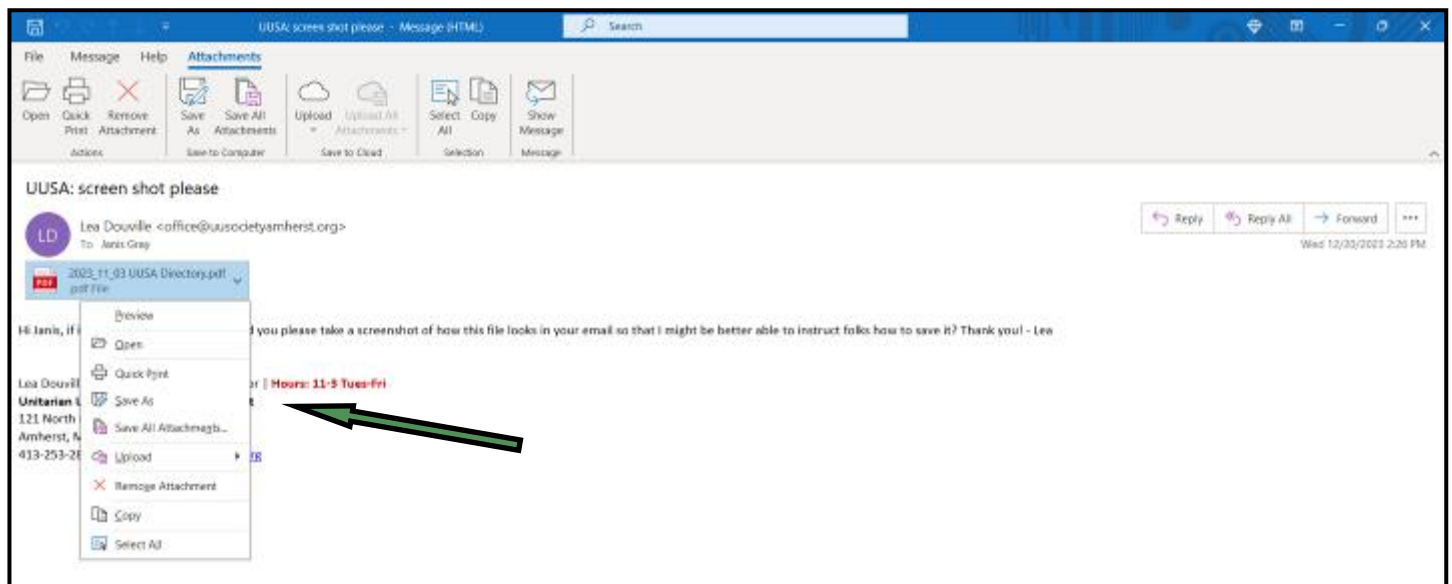
As a result of the "hack" of the password-protected member directory on our website around the Thanksgiving holiday (see next page!), we have elected to remove the link. We will send it to you via email when changes are made. TIP: if you have a UUSA folder on your computer, you can save the file to that so you know where to find it in the future (more on that below).

*Note: if you prefer a printed copy, please let **Lea** know.*

In the meantime, here are a few ways to save the file to your device when you receive it (as always, if you have questions, let **Lea** know!):

In **gmail**, hover over the image of the file, and a down arrow appears; click that and it'll be saved to your downloads file.

In **Outlook**, see screenshot below (you can choose Save As, Quick Print or Save All Attachments):



Co-President's Letter

Beware of Phishing

... Teach a Cybercriminal How to Phish, and You Feed Them for a Lifetime.

Apologies to Maimonides for riffing on his oft-quoted line about teaching self-sufficiency. However, the art of “phishing” has made criminals who lurk on the internet and our inboxes very wealthy.

Phishing is the fraudulent practice of sending emails, texts or other messages purporting to be from a reputable individual or company in order to induce us to reveal personal information, such as passwords, and bank account and credit card numbers. The goal of the cybercriminal is to use the personal information to either hold us hostage for money or get directly into accounts to withdraw money.

Over the Thanksgiving weekend, dozens of us got emails or texts purportedly from Reverend Rachael or me that made similar requests. Fortunately, no one took the bait. We even had someone try to withdraw money from our congregation's bank account with a false check. That too was thwarted.

Phishing threats increased 173% in the third quarter of 2023, according to Vade Secure, a security software vendor. That trend has been consistent for several years.

Why should we at UUSA be concerned? Cybercriminals have been targeting institutions that have lots of personal information yet may not have the best defenses. Vulnerable entities, such as schools, municipalities, and religious institutions, top the list.

Unfortunately, religious institutions have the added burden of being the targets of hate and politically motivated attacks. Though we profess our [Second Principle](#) – justice, equity and compassion in human relations – we must protect ourselves from those who do not ascribe to that.

So, how can you keep yourself and the rest of the congregation safe?

- If you get a request from a UUSA leader that looks suspicious, it probably is.
- Look at the email address or phone number to make sure it's legitimate. For example, the emails that professed that they came from me used an address that I don't own. Email addresses can be easy to fake. Don't click on any links or reply to the sender without checking through another channel, e.g., call me to double check the request.
- Report any suspicious emails to Lea and feel free to share your experience on our UUSA Members and Friends Connection email group to help warn others to avoid the scam. If you aren't currently part of this group but would like to be, please contact Gene Herman or Lea to be invited to the group.
- With both texts and emails, if the sender is not legitimate, report them as spam or junk and block the sender of the text.

Several of us at UUSA will be joining the “Digital Security 101 for Congregations” seminar series sponsored by the UUA in January and early February. This will help inform ways that we can make our communications more safe, and formalize those steps in our Safer Congregation Policy.

Be on the look-out for more tips to keep us safe in 2024.

Stay Safe!

Jeff Clark

Co-President, UUSA Board of Trustees

Our Caring Ministries



The Caring Circle and Pastoral Care Team are joining together and we are now one, complete team here to help You! The two teams met to discuss the way we each attend to the community and felt that we could do a better job if we could collaborate and become more efficient in offering help.

Let us know if you or someone you know would like a phone call or visit, perhaps a ride or a meal. Our mission is to see that no one goes unnoticed and everyone in our community gets the help they need.

Our members remain the same: **Fran Plumer, Charlie Atwood, Pete Rogers, Carol Johnson, Rob**

Fuderich, Rev. Rachael Hayes, Jeanne Ballantine, Carolyn Cave, Mary Latham, Linda Callahan, Sophie Hermann, Lynn Sussman, Kate Dahlstedt, Gordon Wyse, Lauren Croce, Karen Mack, Catharine Porter. To make a contact we suggest you either call or e-mail in the UUSA office or Caring Circle Chair **Catharine Porter.** (If you do not have access to our online directory, Lea can connect you with Catharine.)

It is with great sadness that we let you know of the passing of **Jan Cole-Stryker**, 1938-2023, beloved member of the UUSA since 1976 and wife of **Jay Stryker.** Details on celebrating her life are to come.

Religious Education Ministry

Scenes from our Religious Education students' adaptation of Robin McFadden's The Solstice Badger



Solstice Badger tells the story of the first winter. A lonely Sun sought a friend among the earth's trees, birds and other creatures. He found a friend in a cave-dwelling Badger, who spent most of his time in the dark.

To spend more time with this new friend, Sun begins rising later and setting earlier each day. The Earth decides to welcome the darker times, and call them Winter.



Social Events

SECOND FRIDAY FUN!! January 12, February 9 and March 8 from 5-8:00 P.M. These family-friendly events will include food and fun! Mark your calendars now and “stay tuned” for more details.

Concert Saturday, February 3 at UUSA with Anne Louise White! Save the date!

Free Community Breakfast, every Wednesday, 8:00 -10:00 A.M. in our Social Hall. Co-sponsored with Craig's Doors. *Volunteers welcome (Questions? contact Sophie Rogers)*, or just come to eat and chat!

The Men's Breakfast, our no-agenda Men's Group, meets each Wednesday at 7:00 A.M. at The Stables, 326 Russell St. (Route 9) in Hadley.

The Women's Circle is a supportive and social group of UUSA women open to all. We meet at noon on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month. We will be meeting on Zoom until April. If you are not already on the email notification list, please contact **Lea** in the office to request the link — or before April, ask her to let **Janis Gray** know you want to be added!

Below, a festive collage by Lea Douville of our December Holiday Cookie Swap!



Finance Committee

The **Finance Committee** will meet on **Monday, January 8, at 7:15 P.M. on Zoom.**