

Issue

JULY 2026

# The Foreword

The Newsletter of the  
Unitarian Universalist Church of Amherst  
6320 Main Street, Williamsville, NY 14221  
716-634-3010 (x101 for office)  
Office Hours Tues.—Fri. 9am to 2pm [www.uuamherst.org](http://www.uuamherst.org)



**UU AMHERST**

*Fostering Justice  
and Compassion*

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## Our Covenant

*Together we promise:  
To gather in compassionate  
community,  
To celebrate diversity of thought and  
unity of spirit;  
And to seek wholeness for ourselves,  
our children, and our world.*

## What is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?

That line is the last in Mary Oliver's poem, "The Summer Day," and it is a call to *noticing*, to paying attention and letting the moment be enough; to fill our cups with contentment.

Maybe it is too much to consider what you will do with your one wild and precious life. Perhaps we could start with an afternoon. Or if that is too daunting, a moment to enjoy a spectacular sunset. We (I) pinball from one activity or responsibility to another, with barely a breath or a grabbed protein bar between.

So, I have a challenge for you (me). There are only three months of 'official' summer. As you read this, we have already squandered the first week, since the Solstice that marks the beginning of summer happened on June 21st. Eek!

Do you think you can manage 10 minutes of wonder, once a week, until September 21st and the Autumnal Equinox? That would be a grand total of 130 minutes of wonder over 13 weeks; a little over 2 hours of wonder over the course of the rest of Summer. Of course, if you are an overachiever, please feel free to rack up more points!

The second part of the challenge (oh, did I forget to tell you there was more?) is to resist the urge to grab your phone and take a photo of the moment. Just soak up the moment. You might call the moment to memory later to write something insightful (or silly) in a journal. You might even try a poem or short story or drawing/painting or scientific point of view of a lovely sunset or the intricate beauty of Queen Anne's Lace or the aroma of a warm blueberry crumble, fresh from the oven.

How will I know if you played along? Oh, I'll know. The worry line between your eyebrows will be softened... you may laugh more easily... you just might look more rested or more filled or — well, actually, I don't know what you'll look like; but I can't wait to see and hear how appreciating some wonder makes you shine.

Get outside if you can!  
Rev. Michelle

## JULY SERVICES

It's summer and we have a great lineup of services for you!

**Note: Rev. Michelle will be on sabbatical from July 1st-August 18th.**

**July 5th** "Our Brains, Our Bodies and Music"

Kathy Moriarty, April Starr and others

What happens when you hear or play or move your body to music? Have you ever wondered what some of the science says about this? Let's talk (or sing, or listen, or play....!)

**July 12th** "Have You Heard of the Braver Angels?"

Members of the WNY Braver Angels alliance will be joining the congregation to provide a brief overview of the BA project, its history, and goals and answer questions from the congregation about the workshops and trainings offered by BA. (See details on page 8.)

**July 19th** "The Dog Days of Summer"

john Snodgrass

This time of extreme heat has long been associated with laziness and bad luck, especially for dogs. In this service we'll celebrate the rising temperatures, and the special perspective that can come from taking a break to relax from the busy summer schedule.

john (lower case intentional) Snodgrass is a frequent and popular speaker at UU Amherst. An instructor in Religion at Canisius University, john is also a playwright and author of many books, the most recent being *Shakespeare's Goddess*.

**July 26th** "What're You Noticing Now? Or.. Lookin' for Good in All the Right Places"

Rev. Sally and Katie Cosgrove

There is A LOT going on in our wide wide world right now...perhaps you've noticed?

Today we will share some of what's on our minds with one another, and learn more about the job of centering Love in our lives. Featured musician: Kathy Moriarty



Shared Values graphic created by Tanya Webster for the UUA.

## BOARD REPORT

### Can You Be a Helping Hand?

So much of what we experience at UU Amherst is dependent on volunteers. Their gifts of time and talent are invaluable. UU Amherst wouldn't exist without them. To give a few examples: recently individuals lent a helping hand by plugging holes that carpenter bees drilled in the playground; came in early to make coffee; assisted with an afternoon rental event; stocked the pantry; lit a chalice; worked with a landscaper in the Memorial Garden; and made our annual picnic a special community gathering with wonderful food.



We are so appreciative of all our volunteers, but as we grow, and our programming increases, we need more hands-on deck. If you are not sure what the opportunities are, contact Linda Groat, Ruth Bowen, or any of our Board members.

Volunteering reminds us that the best parts of humanity are built through compassion, kindness, and connection. No matter how many hours you are able to give, it all makes a difference.

And speaking of volunteers, members of the Facilities Team have addressed the carpenter bee problem in the playground. They have sprayed, patched the holes, and the playground is open again for children. Generally, carpenter bees don't sting but sometimes can frighten children.

The Safety Team has also been working on processes associated with the installation of an alarm system that notifies local police in an emergency. Through July we will work on training Guardians and Greeters how to use this system.

And if you have a moment, stop by the Memorial Garden where we have invested in landscaping that highlights our native plants. Take a moment to enjoy the space and reflect on the many good things our community does together.

*"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."* – Helen Keller

–Ruth Bowen, Board Chair

#### CONTRIBUTING TO UU AMHERST

1. The Giving option on the church website (uuamherst.org)
2. A NEW phone app "GivePlus+" for your phone
3. Texting a donation to phone # 833 987 1968
4. Mailing a check [remember to fill in the Memo]
5. There is the traditional Sunday Plate
6. Don't forget Legacy Giving – in your will

## FAITH DEVELOPMENT

### July Blessing: Hold Fast to Summer

Hold fast to summer. Enjoy with heightened appreciation these [warm summer] days. Create more memories, take more pictures. Enjoy a bit of denial. Suck all the summer sweetness out of your sun-warmed garden tomatoes. Smile at someone. Squeeze a hand. Put up some jam or pickles. We store these things up as we approach the uncertain seasons. And our summer companions will be our winter support and sustenance. In celebration of the changing seasons, we gather together in community.

–Ben Soule



### Call for Helpers: Curiosity Week 8/31-9/4

Don't forget! The call for volunteers during our Summer Curiosity Week is now open. If you've expressed interest in running an activity or are available to help with any logistics or childcare, please the below code with your camera and fill out this (very short!) form so I can keep track of everyone's ability and interest. (Or see Katie for a physical form to complete.)



### Philosophy & Spirituality Circle: July 5th

Everyone is welcome to join a monthly drop-in conversation group that will use philosophical prompts to explore individual thoughts about morality, ethics, meaning and more, through the lens of spirituality.

Facilitated by Katie Cosgrove, we use puzzles, paradoxes and thought experiments to get conversation flowing within the hour.

Participants of all backgrounds and beliefs are welcome. No philosophy knowledge or RSVP needed. Just meet us in the back of the Sanctuary by 12:00 pm on Sunday, July 5th, with your morning beverage of choice!

*Please note: While we all do our best to accommodate other meetings on the calendar and choose Sundays that have no conflicts, it is sometimes necessary. My philosophy (pun intended) so far has been to choose different Sundays (if a conflict-free one is not possible) so that different folks may attend each month. Thanks for your understanding!*

In Community,  
Katie Cosgrove (she/her)  
Director of Faith Development  
dfd@uuamherst.org

## AMHERST LITTLE FREE PANTRY

Thank you to our bagging volunteers! Bunny Malone, Debby Berg, and Judy Churchill portion out laundry pods, and the youth in Faith Development have helped with pet food. Due to the success of "The Cheryl Fund" for menstrual care products, we will no longer need to break down packages into smaller quantities—we can afford to offer full boxes or bags of needed supplies.

Thank you to the Garden team! Fresh produce from our own grounds was available to pantry users beginning June 10th. Swiss Chard was the first harvest.

We continue to see heavy usage and are re-stocking twice most days. More volunteers would be welcome! Volunteer tasks include shopping, stocking, and sending thank-yous to donors (email for a pre-written letter depending on donation size). We also have upcoming fundraising events and could use help with set-up, staffing during the event, and clean-up. Save the dates! Fabulous Frozen Ice Cream Social is Sunday, August 9th, and the Witch Dance and Halloween Party is Saturday, October 10th.

We're moving away from Sunday meetings. Our next general meeting is Wednesday, September 9th, from 4:00-5:00 pm in the Library/Living Room.

–Marie Evans

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## UU AMHERST BOOK GROUP



UU Amherst Book Group next meets on Sunday, May 31, at noon in the Library/Living Room. Our TOPIC is Speculative Fiction, which includes Science Fiction. Read any book that fits the topic then report on it to the group. Or just come to listen and get ideas for your TBR (To Be Read) book list.

May is our last gathering for this church year. At that time, we'll choose a date in July to meet for lunch at Bestcellar Book Bar in Clarence, where we'll discuss what we're each reading over the summer.

We've already chosen our themes for September and October. In September, choose one of two related BOOKS: (narrative financial history) *1929: Inside the Greatest Crash in Wall Street History and How It Shattered a Nation* by Andrew Ross Sorkin,

OR (fiction) *Trust* by Hernán Díaz. The October TOPIC: The Responsible Quest for Truth & Meaning

–Marie Evans

## USED BOOKS

The white shelves in the Library/Living Room are more organized! Thank you to Meg Sabella, Debby Berg, and Betty Crump for sorting help. The first three sections are non-fiction and the final two are fiction. Your free will offering benefits Amherst Little Free Pantry. Suggested donation is \$1 per book. Look for the cash box or scan a QR code.

# JULY 2026 CALENDAR

**PLEASE NOTE:** Some meetings are virtual-only) and some in-person only. See the notation after the meeting. Zoom links are provided by the group hosts or by request from the Office Administrator.

**Room abbreviations:** EM (Emerson Room); LR Living Room); Bul (Bulfinch-FD Wing); EC (Ecology Center); Murray Meeting Room (MMR)

## Wednesday, July 1st

7:45 am: John Newman Mission (weekly-rental) MMR

## Thursday, July 2nd - 13th

**OFFICE CLOSED**

## Sunday, July 5th

12:00 pm: Philosophy & Spirituality Circle CH

2:30 pm: Shamanic Journey (rental) LR

## Tuesday, July 7th

10:30 am: Leadership Dev & Nominating Comm EM

12:30 pm: Women's Group Lunch EM

## Wednesday, July 8th

7:45 am: John Newman Mission (weekly-rental) MMR

## Saturday, July 11th

9:30 am: Holistic Balance Retreat (rental) BUL

10:00 am: Lace Guild (rental) LR

1:00 pm: Rainbow Café Picnic - Patio

## Tuesday, July 14th

6:00 pm: Endowment Trust Meeting MMR

## Wednesday, July 15th

7:45 am: John Newman Mission (weekly-rental) MMR

6:00 pm: Finance Meeting MMR

7:30 pm: Board Meeting MMR

## Saturday, July 18th

1:00 pm Firewall EM/CH

## Sunday, July 19th

12:00 pm: Safety Committee

## Tuesday, July 21st

6:30 pm: Lace Guild (rental) LR

## Wednesday, July 22nd

7:45 am: John Newman Mission (weekly-rental) MMR

## RECURRING: SUNDAYS

### Sundays, July 5th-26th

9:30 am: Church of the Wild EC

9:30 am: Sacred Singing Circle MMR  
No SSC July 5th

10:30 am: Sunday service—in-person and  
livestream; coffee hour following

## RECURRING MEETINGS:

UU Universe-ity Sunrise Sessions

M-F 8:30 am on Zadmin

All "tree" names are for Village groups

### Mondays, July 6th-27th

7:00 pm: Tulip Crabapples Zadmin (weekly)

### Wednesdays, July 1st-29th

7/15 (3rd Wed)

7:00 pm: Northtowns Village Zoom

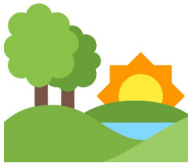
### Saturdays, July 5th -25th

9:30 am: Sharing Circle Zadmin

7:00 pm: Birch Bunch Zadmin

## Coffee Hour Contributions

Your contributions to the Sunday coffee are greatly appreciated. And if you're planning to bring nibbles to share, please (oh please), do not bring candy. We love our energetic children - and they have all the energy they need! Thanks for understanding.



## Church of the Wild

Beginning June 7<sup>th</sup>, join us at 9:30 am in the Debbie Waterhouse Ecology Center. Bring a chair, a poem, your wonder of nature. Lauraine Marcus will meet you at the edge of the Ecology Center near the basketball court at the back of the parking lot. Church of the Wild is an all weather event (except a torrential downpour).

## Sacred Singing Circle

Come sing with us for connection and calm every Sunday morning in the Murray Meeting Room from 9:30-10:15 am before service. No knowledge or experience in music is needed. Note: There will not be Sacred Singing Circle on July 5th.

## Tuesday Women's Group

The Women's Group is now meeting for in-person lunch, only, the first Tuesday of the month. Our next lunch gathering will be on July 7th in the Emerson Room at 12:30 pm. Bring your lunch and a beverage.

## Memorial Service Volunteers Needed

Memorial Services are an important part of our spiritual mission. Often, receptions follow in the Emerson Room. Please lend a hand to help your community connect and reflect on the life of their loved one. We are there to support healing through shared memories, stories, food, and drink. Contact Dian Tucker, directly, to volunteer for this important work or email administrator@uuamherst.org.

## Save the Date!

### Potluck & Workshop

**Friday, September 18th, 5:30-8:00 pm**

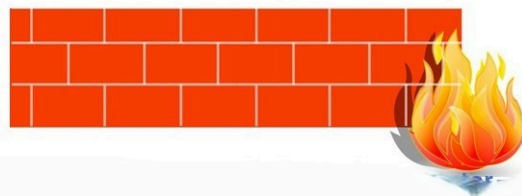
Rev. Douglas Taylor from UU Binghamton will guide us through a workshop to prepare UU Amherst for the transition from pastoral-sized to program-sized congregation and all that means. If you are in leadership or simply curious, put the date in your calendar. Sign-ups for the potluck will be available in late August.

## Firewall Meeting

**Saturday, July 18th @ 9:00 am**

Unitarian Universalist Church of Amherst

*Firewall is a coalition of Concerned Citizens who support Democracy and the Rule of Law.*



*"In an era of constant crises, many people are finding themselves emotionally exhausted, overwhelmed, and struggling to sustain hope and engagement. In this talk, Dr. Brianna Migliore examines burnout through the lens of the nervous system, exploring how modern life keeps us in chronic states of stress and dysregulation, and what individuals can do to support regulation, resilience and sustainable collective action."*

- Follow us on [YouTube: @FirewallUmbrellaWNY](#)
- Check us out on Bluesky by clicking on the QR code. [Firewall451.bsky.social](#)

*Firewall is a Political Action Group that is not affiliated with the UU Church of Amherst.*

## “Depolarizing Ourselves” Workshop

Sunday, July 12th, 12 noon

Chapel

Following the July 12th service, Braver Angels will present a workshop on “Depolarizing Ourselves” designed to help you to lessen the effects of polarization when you encounter them in your political conversations or advocacy. By “polarization,” we are not referring to healthy disagreements over issues or philosophy but rather, how we regard and talk to and about large groups of ordinary people on the other side of our own politics as if they were enemies. The workshop will provide several strategies that participants can pull on to start thinking of our neighbors as our neighbors - even when we disagree with them. You can register for the workshop here: <https://mobilize.us/s/j4ErJo> (not required).

Braver Angels is a cross-partisan, volunteer-led movement that works to bridge the partisan divide and strengthen our democratic republic by inspiring and equipping Americans across political differences through skill-building, convening, and collaborative action.



**WNY UU PICNIC**

You're invited to join  
WNY Unitarian Universalist congregations  
for a joint picnic on:

*Saturday, August 22<sup>nd</sup>*  
12pm-3pm  
@ UU Amherst  
6320 Main St, Buffalo, NY 14221

**BRING YOUR OWN LUNCH!**

Instead of a potluck, we're asking everyone to bring their own individual lunch. We'll have some small snacks and light beverages available.

Chef Bruce  
will be grilling  
hot dogs and  
burgers for  
\$2 each!

**UU AMHERST ONLINE STORE**

[shop.printyourcause.com/campaigns/uu-amherst-store](http://shop.printyourcause.com/campaigns/uu-amherst-store)



## The Amazing Gifts of Walking in Awe

*Encountering nature with openness to wonder, we're rewarded with more than astonishment and delight. We become more genuinely human.*

The nature trail where I've walked for almost thirty years follows a creek that flows for miles through busy suburban villages out into rural farmlands. When I'm not rushing to get in my daily steps or distracted by cyclists and roller bladers whizzing by, I give myself over to a sensory-filled immersion that easily qualifies as an "awe walk."

I first heard this phrase in a TEDx talk, *The Power of Feeling Small*,\* given by Australian journalist, Julia Baird, and immediately fell in love with it. Baird experienced nature's power to awe when she began ocean swimming in the early hours of dawn. Over time, she became more and more captivated by the wonder of sea life that surrounded her. Baird had discovered that awe emerged from opening to wonder and connecting to the natural world. It was a revelation that shaped her belief that awe can heal us, comfort us, and strengthen us without demanding anything in return. Near the end of her talk, she invited her audience to "walk with awe," something we rarely do in daily life but which provides immense gifts for body, mind, and soul.



I knew this from my encounters with nature and evolving my own version of awe walking—using every sense to immerse in the beauty surrounding me and reflecting on the feelings and insights that arise. I write about it and even teach it to others.

Sometimes, though, I have to remind myself to look, listen, smell, and touch as if entering the world for the first time with eyes of wonder. Life gets in the way. My mind tangles with issues from the past or gets caught up in the *what if's* of tomorrow.

But when I slow down and focus on stillness, nature always reaches out with a welcoming surprise. On one of my late spring walks the surprise came in the form of a blue heron standing serenely on the creek bank. Herons, I've found, are notoriously skittish and will take to the air at the slightest rustle of sound. I stood quietly, watching him (or her) study the creek and then the sky with intense concentration. For several minutes the statuesque bird stood motionless, a feathered buddah in meditation, eventually spreading enormous wings and flying off to, perhaps, a more lucrative fishing spot.

Watching the heron with deep attention felt like a moment frozen in time which is what happens when we're ensnared by the wonder of the other-than-human beings with whom we share the Earth. It's not enough for me to say that "I saw a blue heron," but more accurately in the language of awe, "I met a blue heron." Awe brings connection; it restores relationship.

Julia Baird felt an overwhelming sense of connection to the ocean creatures during her swims, noticing their playfulness, their curiosity, their almost otherworldly appendages possibly thousands of years old in design. She met her underwater companions with delight but also reverence and found, unexpectedly, calm. Peace of mind. Joy.

Like others in the science world who have studied the impacts of awe on the human psyche and emotions, Baird discovered that her encounters gifted her in unexpected ways. "Awe," she says, "makes us calmer. Kinder. More altruistic. It gobsmacks you."

Rev. Michelle in her July letter (front page) invites us to engage in ten minutes of wonder, once a week. To soak up the moment. It's not only a challenge, but a health prescription. When you walk, stop and breathe, alert to awe. The invitation is always extended.

–Elaine Harrigan as published on [substack.com/livingwildwisdom](http://substack.com/livingwildwisdom)

\*Julia Baird's talk can be found on YouTube. Search for "The Power of Feeling Small" to view.

## RAINBOW COALITION

During Pride Month, The Rainbow Cafe was not held due to focusing Rainbow Coalition efforts on the Buffalo Pride Parade 2026: Rooted In Love and attending the many Pride Month events across the region. Rainbow Coalition members organized members and friends of UUCA to march in the parade in partnership with Clean Air Coalition of WNY. Everyone had lots of fun celebrating together and showing the congregation's support for the LGBTQIA2S+ community.



In July, The Rainbow Cafe will return to the events calendar on Saturday July 11, 1:00 pm-3:00 pm, with The First Annual Pride Picnic at UU Amherst. Grab your favorite picnic item: the lace tablecloth, the fancy candle sticks, the crystal goblet, etc. and bring it to our picnic. Let's do it up right in Pride! Rainbow Cafe welcomes all LGBTQIA2S+ people and their direct allies.

-April Starr

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## JUSTICE ADVOCACY

The Justice Team is going on retreat! Come join us for one or more days at the Great Blue Heron Music Festival, July 2-5. Music and fun provided! [Greatblueheron.com](http://Greatblueheron.com) for tickets.



## CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER RECIPES Provided by Christine Boczarska and Faith Pham

Christine Boczarska and Faith Pham are sisters and dedicated members of our Caring For One Another Team. They provide occasional meals to UU Amherst members on an as-needed basis. With the meal they generally include a “goodie bag” and a card on behalf of the Caring Group. Each month you’ll find one of their healthy recipes here in *The Foreword* often incorporating fresh vegetables and even gluten-free. This is a recipe for a cream soup base to which you may add your choice of vegetables and/or seafood for a lovely meal.

### Cream Soup

Recipe from Hurd Orchards. Prep time about 1 hour

1/4 cup butter  
1/4 cup flour  
1 cup half and half milk  
1/4 cup, or to taste, dry Marsala  
1 cup vegetable stock  
1 bay leaf  
1/4 cup fresh thyme leaves  
1 cup cooked orzo  
1 cup of any precooked vegetables, such as carrots, asparagus and mushrooms and/or seafood such as clams, shrimp, crab or calamari.  
Salt and pepper



Blanch or microwave your choice of vegetables and set aside; lightly sauté seafood, if using, and set aside.

Cook orzo per package instructions and set aside.

Melt butter in a medium soup pot then sift in the 1/4 cup of flour, stirring constantly for about 3 to 4 minutes until the flour is fully cooked.

Slowly add the half and half, Marsala and vegetable stock while whisking continuously to prevent lumps from forming.

Add the bay leaf, fresh thyme leaves, precooked vegetables and/or seafood, cooked orzo and salt and pepper to taste. Cook for several minutes until all is heated through and serve with buttered bread.

Enjoy the vegetables as they come in season.

#### HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT

This is a reminder that if you are experiencing financial hardship, you can reach out to Rev. Michelle, [minister@uuamherst.org](mailto:minister@uuamherst.org), for assistance from the Minister’s Discretionary Fund. This Fund is made possible by the generosity of fellow congregants, and just one more way we demonstrate that no one is alone.  
We care for one another.