

Issue

DECEMBER 2024

The Foreword



UU AMHERST

*Fostering Justice
and Compassion*

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

Our Staff:

Minister

Rev. Michelle Buhite
Office.....x102
Cell....716-499-8343
minister@uuamherst.org

Finance Clerk

Camilla Lee.....x103
bookkeeper@uuamherst.org

Office Administrator

Elaine Harrigan.....x101
administrator@uuamherst.org

Director of Faith Development

Katie Cosgrove
dfd@uuamherst.org

Minister Emerita

Rev. Maureen Q. Thitchener

Being a Unitarian Universalist, a faith that is intentionally expansive, can be a little bit complicated: How do we explain a pluralism that welcomes spiritual traditions and practices whose center is Love? At a time when the nation seems more polarized than at any other time in our lifetimes, how do we make space for and honor traditions that may not mirror our own? These questions seem especially pertinent during the month of December.



This year there are five major holidays during December that we pause to acknowledge:

- 12/8 is “Bodhi Day” - celebrated by Buddhists as the day when the Buddha received enlightenment.
- 12/21 thru 1/1 is “Yule” - celebrated by Earth-loving people (Pagans, Wiccans, and so many more). Yule begins with the Winter Solstice, the longest night of the year, when the Earth itself seems to slow down to receive the newborn light.
- 12/24 & 12/25 are “Christmas” - celebrated by Christians as the coming of the Christ child, and celebrated culturally as a time for gift giving and generosity.
- 12/26 thru 1/1 is “Kwanzaa” - celebrated by African American people as a celebration of cultural heritage and traditional values.
- 12/26 thru 1/2 is “Hanukkah” - celebrated by Jewish people in commemoration of the liberation and rededication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem in the second century BCE. (Since Jewish holidays begin at sundown, Hanukkah actually begins on 12/25.)

Various UU congregations may offer moments of recognition during Sunday services, or offer times for reflection through online messages or small gatherings, depending on the make-up of their congregation. In Faith Development, children might learn about these traditions and engage in small rituals, like pouring tea over a statue of the Buddha for Bodhi Day. In North America, Christmas might not need much explaining, but perhaps some contextualization in a month that includes many celebrations.

Whatever holidays/holy days you do or do not participate in, may this month that finds many faith communities celebrating the return of the light and the hope for peace and good will, be meaningful for you and yours.

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.*



MINISTER'S CORNER

Dear Friends,

This month we consider our Unitarian Universalist value of Transformation. Sure. Right. Like any of us have two seconds to consider *anything* this month.

That's fair. So, if we don't have the time or energy to actually consider Transformation, perhaps we have a moment to enjoy a glimmer of something that we can post on the fridge or tape to the dashboard of our car or wherever we can pause for 3 breaths and take in a word of hope. Does that feel possible?

I offer you this prayer by UU minister, Erik Walker Wikstrom:

*May we listen so that we can hear;
May we hear so that we can feel;
May we feel so that we can know; and
May we know so that we can change ourselves and this world.*

Always,
Rev. Michelle

(I will be taking some study leave and vacation time this month.)

DECEMBER SUNDAY SERVICES AT 10:30 AM

12/1 Evergreen

Rev. Michelle

The morning service will be an All-Souls remembrance service. All are invited to bring photos and mementos to add to a shared altar as we honor and bless those who have touched our lives and are no longer with us.

12/8 Leadership Sunday

Offered by the Leadership Development & Nominating Committee:

Our goal is to acquaint the congregation with the many current activities they may like to join at UU Church of Amherst. Activities offer engagement which leads to a strong, vibrant, and growing church community. This forum will appeal to both newcomers and established church members who are looking for activities that will support their interests and growth.

12/15 Creeps

John Snodgrass, guest

Anxieties can swarm like insects, and insects swarm like anxieties. When we're feeling overrun and overwhelmed - what can we do in our little corner of the world? Maybe it's time to clean the kitchen.

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*.

12/22 Solstice Experience

Rev. Michelle & Friends

In the midst of our various holiday preparations, we pause to honor the longest night (at our usual morning hour). This is an experiential service. Come ready to have the spirit whisper in your ear.

12/29 The In-Between

Worship Design Team

Between holidays. Between old year and new year. We find ourselves in-between.

BOARD REPORT

We had a well-attended 70th Anniversary party on Saturday, November 9th with glowing reviews and numerous positive comments on both the reception in the Murray Meeting Room and the dinner in the Emerson Room. Many thanks to Bruce Becker and the rest of the GSD Team for putting it together and making it come off so well. Thanks to Roger and Ron for their end of the post event clean up.

Rev. Michelle put together a great program which included a congratulatory Proclamation from the Town of Amherst delivered by Councilwoman, Jacqualine Berger, video congratulations from Rev. Dr. Sofia Betancourt, UUA President and Rev. Renee Ruchotzke, CER, as well as many songs played by vocalist and pianist Adam Schmidt. It's a great help in putting together a program when your minister is a former theatre director! Thanks, Michelle.



Also, thanks to all those who attended, your presence helped make the evening the great success it was.

When you pass through our main doors look to your right and you will see a black covering over the entrance to the nearest coat closet. It's a sign that construction has begun to prepare that room for the new boiler system that will be providing heat for the Chapel. Once the room is done and it passes the Town of Amherst Inspection, the installation of the new boiler system will begin, work for which will take place during the week.

As of this writing we have received over \$30,000 in donations which is close to half the expected cost of the project. Thank you to all those who have donated to keep us warm in the Chapel this winter. We continue to accept donations.

Also thank you to those who have responded to the kick-off of the Generosity Drive and sent your pledges in. We will be sending reminder letters out soon to those we have not heard from yet. We do ask you to be generous as we continue our renewal while building for the future.

Given all the turmoil in the world, I believe we need to continue to be strong as we continue to grow our congregational community.

I hope you all have a great holiday season

Randy Kent, Board Chair (linrkent@yahoo.com)

Coordination of Caretaker Duties—December

Sunday, Nov 24 - Saturday, Nov 30 - Randy Kent
Sunday, Dec 1 - Saturday, Dec 7 - Don & Dian Tucker
Sunday, Dec 8 - Saturday, Dec 14 - Bob Johnson
Sunday, Dec 15 - Saturday, Dec 21 - Barry Kent
Sunday, Dec 22 - Saturday, Dec 28 - Bruce Becker
Sunday, Dec 29 - Saturday, Jan 4 - Randy Kent

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, 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.

INSIGHT SPEAKER SERIES

The Environmental Impact of Food Waste

Tuesday, December 10, 7:00 pm

Learn how food handling in your home and composting can make a positive impact on the environment. Food Waste makes up more than one-fifth of the garbage that is sent to landfills. As we run out of landfill space, New York is working on diverting this waste from the largest contributors in the state. We will be talking about ways to reduce your personal contributions to the landfill.

Our Speaker, John Szalasny, is an Executive Committee Member with the Sierra Club Niagara Group, Chair of the Town of Amherst's Recycling and Waste Committee, and a contributing feature writer for *Buffalo Rising*, an online news and events publication focused on the Western New York region.

THEATER LOVERS

We had a moving and thought-provoking outing to "Remember This" at Jewish Repertory Theatre, followed by dinner together at Lebro's Italian Restaurant in November. The next JRT show runs February 6 to March 2, so more details will be in the January Foreword. "The Wanderers" is a play about two Jewish couples that's described as a "funny, moving, thoughtful play that asks if following one's truth is worth it, no matter the cost."

Marie Evans

UU AMHERST BOOK GROUP

Our TOPIC for December 29 is HUMOR (especially involving Family). Join us in the Library/Living Room at noon to hear what we've been reading (whether or not you have a title to share).

January is a BOOK month - we'll be discussing *The Office of Historical Corrections: A Novella and Stories* by Danielle Evans on January 26.

Questions? Marie Evans Evans.marie@gmail.com, 716-636-5770



Congratulations, Rev. Michelle! The congregation celebrated Rev. Michelle's 10th anniversary as minister at UU Amherst in conjunction with the church's 70th anniversary.



Adopt An Angel Reminder

If you committed to "Adopt an Angel" for Gateway Longview: All gifts (unwrapped) must be received by Thursday, December 5. *For most of the children, this is the only gift they will receive this holiday season.* If transportation to church is an issue, I can arrange a pick up. Any questions, contact Marie Evans.



Decorating Our Holiday Tree With Gloves and Mittens

Help support our clothing mission by decorating our lobby holiday tree with gloves and mittens our neighbors need in the winter. Our tree will shine not only with the stars that represent the "Angels" we are supporting this year with gifts but also with the love that these new and/or slightly used items represent.

CONNECTIONS TEAM

The Name Tag Board has been reorganized to be current and alphabetized to make room for all our newcomers. If you can't find yours, please see someone at the Welcome Desk.

The Connection Team provides outreach to newcomers to help them make quick connections to meaningful activities and relationships. Our goal for the new year is to increase membership and participation of members in general.

Our priorities include:

- Increase volunteer participation on Sundays, especially in Connections and Faith Development by providing programming and training resources.
- Develop a program for Newcomers including improved website experience, tours of the building, education around stewardship opportunities, and matching newcomers with active members, as mentors.
- Reach out to inactive members and offer opportunities to reconnect.



Anyone interested in learning about and/or joining our Connections Team, please email me.

Linda Joy Groat, Lmgeag@gmail.com

DECEMBER 2024 CALENDAR

PLEASE NOTE: Some meetings are virtual-only; others are dual platform (Zoom and in-person); and some in-person only. See the notation after the meeting. Zoom links for general groups are published in the *Weekly Update* unless they are hosted on a private account. Zoom events taking place in the Zadmin or Zrev rooms are identified with the abbreviation.

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

Sunday, December 1st

12:00 pm: Amherst Little Free Pantry Meeting LR

12:00 pm: Holiday Boutique & Gift Wrap

Tuesday, December 3rd

12:30 pm: Women's Group Lunch EM

Saturday, December 7th

9:30 am: Ministry Train EM

Sunday, December 8th

12:00 pm: Poetry as Practice LR

12:00 pm: Holiday Boutique & Gift Wrap

Tuesday, December 10th

7:00 pm: Insight Speaker Series

Sunday, December 15th

12:00pm: Justice Advocacy Meeting EM

Wednesday, December 18th

7:00 pm: Board Meeting MMR

Tuesday, December 24th

3:00 pm: Christmas Eve Service CH

Wednesday, December 25th

Christmas Day—Office Closed

Saturday, December 28th

10:30 am-2:00 pm: Havurah Service CH/EM

Sunday, December 29th

12:00 pm: UU Amherst Book Group LR

RECURRING:

UU Universe-ity Sunrise Sessions continues M-F 8:30 am.

All "tree" names are for Village groups

Saturdays, December 7th-28th

7:00 pm: Birch Bunch Zadmin

Sundays, December 1st-29th

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

12/15 (3rd Sun)

12:00 pm: Faith Development MMR

Mondays, December 2nd-30th

7:00 pm: Tulip Crabapples Zadmin (weekly)
L. Marcus

Tuesdays, December 3rd-24th

12:30 pm: Women's Group (weekly) Zoom

12/10 (2nd Tue)

7:00 pm: Marlana's Covenant Group LR

Wednesdays, December 4th-25th

12/11(2nd Wed)

1:30 pm: Caring Team Zoom

12/18 (3rd Wed)

1:30 pm: 3rd Wednesday Covenant Group

7:00 pm: Northtowns Village

Thursdays, December 5th-26th

12/5 (1st Thr)

12:00 pm: Men's Lunch (aka ROMEOS)
(Buffalo Brew Pub)

Reminder: Groups, please restore rooms before leaving. Return chairs to their places and take any papers (etc) with you or dispose of them properly.

Kitchen Storage: All opened packages must be enclosed in plastic containers or Ziplock bags before placing in cupboards.

Ministry Train Update

All aboard the Ministry Train! Truly, all are welcome to attend the meetings that bring the various areas of ministry together for mutual support, encouragement, and generating new ideas to enhance our connections and live into our mission as a congregation. The next meeting is Saturday, December 7, 9:30-12n in the Emerson Room at church.

Gathering Interest for another Brené Brown Zoom Group

Last fall, a group of us met for 8 weeks and worked through the Dare to Lead program, led by Rev. Michelle Buhite and myself. I would like to offer something again beginning in January, on Zoom. Please email me if you are interested in participating. Linda Joy Groat
Lmgeag@gmail.com.

Tuesday Women's Group

This month our in-person meeting will be Tuesday, December 3rd. We will meet in the Emerson Room at 12:30 p.m. Bring your lunch and a beverage. Other meeting dates via Zoom are: December 10th, 17th, 24th, and 31st. See the *Weekly Update* for Zoom link and pass code.

Men's Lunch (ROMEOS)

The UU Amherst's Men's Lunch (aka ROMEOS) meets every month on the first Thursday at the Buffalo Brew Pub. Come and enjoy good conversation, food, and drink. We meet at 12 noon and stay as long as conversation and schedules guide. We discuss a wide range of topics driven by interests and events of the day.

Did you know that we have a gender-neutral restroom?

This private restroom can be found on the second level of the house portion of our building. If you're offering a tour to a newcomer, be sure to mention that we have this accommodation.

MINISTRY & MORE

Music at UU Amherst

Choir Call-Out & Rehearsals

If you are a singer in search of a song, join the choir! Questions? Contact Linda Delorey (lmscapecod@yahoo.com) (note that the first letter is a lower-case "L") for information.

Instrumentalists Wanted

Do you play an instrument? Would you like to be part of a pick-up ensemble or even a soloist? Great! Contact Rev. Michelle (minister@uuamherst.org).



Christmas Eve Service

Tuesday, December 24th at 3:00pm

At this busy and dark time of year, it is a challenge to find the perfect time to gather on Christmas Eve. Many of our elders don't drive after dark, yet we look forward to the ambiance of a dark candlelit space as we sing "Silent Night." Although some folks will still be doing last-minute shopping, or preparations for family or guests, or the many other things that demand our attention, our Christmas Eve service will be held in the late afternoon. There will be coffee, tea, and cocoa to go with whatever holiday goodies you might contribute to a time of fellowship and sweetness following the service.

Please note: If you are approached at church by someone asking for money, please direct them to Rev. Michelle for assistance from the Minister's Discretionary Fund. Contributing to the fund is our shared ministry to help those in need.

FAITH DEVELOPMENT

Genders & Sexualities Alliance Club

A Gender & Sexualities Club, GSA for short, are student-run organizations that unite LGBTQ+ and allied youth to build community and organize around issues impacting them in their schools and communities.

We're aiming to provide a safe space for these youth during the upcoming winter break. If you know anyone who would be interested in joining the club or becoming club leadership, please refer them to Katie Cosgrove: dfd@uuamherst.org.



In community,
Katie Cosgrove she/her
Director of Faith Development

AMHERST LITTLE FREE PANTRY

Volunteer with us! We have short and long-term tasks, to be completed both at UU Amherst or at home. Contact Marie Evans for details, or come to the orientation on Sunday, December 8, at noon in the front hall outside the Library/Living Room where the staircases meet.

Items most needed for the winter months: tuna in oil, peanut butter, canned fruit, soups, side dish mixes (instant potatoes, stuffing, rice pilaf), and coffee.

Remember the pantry if you get take-out and have spare plasticware or condiments. And if you travel to hotels, we'll take extra personal care samples of shampoo, conditioner, or body lotion.

If you'd like to make a donation in honor of a person or event (or as a holiday gift - hint, hint), that option is available when you give online at <https://givebutter.com/amherst-little-free-pantry-ltd>, from a PayPal account via a "Send and Request" transaction with a note in the "What's this for?" box, or by writing a check to Amherst Little Free Pantry Ltd with the honoree's name in the memo line (mail it to us at 6320 Main Street, Williamsville, NY 14221). If you prefer to donate cash, please enclose your gift in an envelope with your information and hand-deliver it to one of the pantry officers (Meg Sabella, Marie Evans, or Doreen Park).

Thank you to all our generous donors. The need keeps ramping up. It's not unusual for a volunteer doing restocking to encounter 3 or 4 users in one hour.



NOMINATING & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

We are excited about the Church Service our committee will be presenting on Sunday, December 8th. It will provide an opportunity for some of our leaders to tell you about the teams and events in which they participate.

No voting member of the congregation made any additional suggestions for nominations to any member of the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee. Thus, the Slate of Nominees for the 2025 Annual Meeting remains the same as previously announced. However, members of the congregations may make further nominations for trustees or this committee by securing a petition signed by at least 10 (10) voting members, providing that the consent of the nominee has been obtained. Such additional nominations must be received by the Board of Trustees no later than the 15th day of December.

Suzanne Christ, on behalf of Committee members: Jacquelyn Senders, Chairperson; Marlana Rice; Marjorie Buscher; Jacqueline Babka; Linda Gardner, nominee of the Board of Trustees

FUNDRAISING TASK GROUP

We have had a very busy year and are looking forward to 2025. Our minds are constantly working on ways to raise money for the UUCA. We do not have any active plans just now, but we encourage everyone to continue supporting UUAmherst by pledging for 2025 (pledge box is in the lobby), donating to the boiler fund (construction has begun), and if you have the means, adding a charitable holiday donation on top of your already generous support. Thank you for your generosity.

The Fundraising Task Force (Pam Kent, Dian Tucker Karen Thompson, Barbara Kent Gauger)

CLOTHING MINISTRY

The Clothing Ministry is planning a Holiday Boutique and Gift Wrap event on Sundays, December 1st and 8th, after the service. Our dream is to make enough to buy sturdy racks for our ministry. The Clothing Ministry is supported by your donations. We receive no funding from the church. There will be new clothing, jewelry, and other items for sale. Consider us your first shopping stop for the holidays.

Clothing Ministry Team, Dian (diantucker17@gmail.com) and Don Tucker, Pam and Jerry Kent, Barry Kent and Barbara Kent Gauger

FACILITIES: BOILER UPDATE

The new room for the boiler, which is inside the old coatroom to the right as you enter the lobby, is done and ready for the boiler itself to be installed, scheduled to start early December. This should be operational early in the new year, keeping the chapel toasty and relieving the ancient unit. The fundraising is progressing well, with half of the money raised at \$36,000 plus. Endless thanks to those who have already given and to those who are planning to give as they are able! And endless thanks to the facilities movers and shakers and wonderful workmen who can get things done on schedule!

Wendy Scott

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 group. 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.

Pumpkin Pie

- 2 pie crusts, either homemade or frozen
- 1 1/2 cups pumpkin (steamed or canned)
- 1 can evaporated milk (1 1/2 cups)
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup white sugar or honey
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp ginger
- 1/4 tsp cloves
- 1/2 tsp nutmeg
- 4 slightly beaten eggs
- 2 Tbsp melted butter
- 1 pint of heavy whipping cream, whipped



Beat eggs and add remaining ingredients. Mix thoroughly. Pour into unbaked pastry shells and bake 10 minutes in 475° oven. Reduce heat to 350 and bake long enough for filling to set - knife should come out clean when inserted into custard. Cool for an hour then garnish with whipped cream. The pie turns out not as sweet as a bought pie and the spicing is more subtle.

70th Anniversary Celebration at UU Amherst





ENDOWMENT TRUST

The holiday season brings thoughts of joy and gratitude, and there's no better time to express our thanks and sincere appreciation for all that you do for UU Amherst. Your donations to the Endowment Trust reflect your commitment to insuring the future of our beloved community. It enabled the Endowment to contribute \$51,000 to the congregation's annual operating budget this year. At the 2024 Annual Meeting, the congregation approved of the Endowment's commitment to provide up to the UU Amherst up to 5% of the total value of unrestricted funds for the operating budget. The Endowment will again be able to contribute up to \$51,000 in 2025.

The December 31st IRS deadline for tax deductions will be here before you realize it. We encourage you to discuss year-end charitable actions with your financial, tax, and legal advisors and to explore the related resources to help you increase your charitable impact and reduce your taxable income. Please keep the Endowment in mind.

As of October 31st, the total value of our funds with Level Wealth Management was \$1,029,672.76, with an additional \$5,000 in Citizen Bank. Our next scheduled meeting is January 29, 2025, at 6:00 pm in the Emerson Room. UU Amherst members are welcome to attend (please contact a Trustee in advance if you have a specific topic/question).

Lauraine Marcus, on behalf of the Endowment Trustees: John Thompson, Dian Tucker, Barry Kent, Tamara Kofke

GROUNDS & GARDEN TEAM

Great news! Our Garden Group will be expanding to include the management of the entire campus of UU Grounds (not the Ecology Center for now). This new direction will allow us to take a more holistic approach to landscape management and beautification, ensuring that our shared spaces are thoughtfully cared for. Key priorities include:

Tree Planting: We will collaboratively decide on locations for new trees when donations are made, ensuring they are placed in ideal spots that support the campus ecosystem.

Tree Management: We will also work together to assess old and dying trees and make informed decisions about their removal to promote safety and health within our landscape.

Garden Bed Management: We will plan ways to build simplicity and beauty into our bed, so they are easy to maintain and enjoyable to all.

With this expansion, we aim to work in a coordinated manner. While I will continue to lead our Garden Planting/Tending group, Pam Kent will take the lead in overseeing the Grounds portion and serve as the main point of communication with the board, representing our collective goals and needs, and will enhance our campus's beauty and improve our gardening practices.

Our **next meeting is Friday, January 31, 2025 at 3:00-4:30 pm** in the Murray Meeting Room. We welcome Anyone interested in gardening, experienced or not! Please email me to join us.

Linda Joy Groat, Lmgeag@gmail.com.





UU AMHERST

Fostering Justice and Compassion

6320 Main Street
Williamsville, NY 14221
634-3010
www.uuamherst.org