



*The Unitarian Society
of Northampton & Florence*
Weekly Newsletter

Board Updates

December 7, 2021 Vol. 2, Issue 12.1

Visit us on the web at www.uunorthampton.org

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Sign Up for In-Person Sunday Service

[In Person Service Reservation
Link](#)

Click above to register to attend our service in the Great Hall.

Sunday, December 12, 2021: 10:00 am

All services will be available on Zoom & YouTube. Use the regular service link on our homepage.

Board Report

The Board and the Coordinating Committee gathered together in November for our annual shared meeting. Our discussion this year was inspired by the work of the ***Widening the Circle of Concern*** report, through asking the question, “*Are we a welcoming congregation?*” Within that question we discussed how and when we have felt connected at USNF, when have we felt disconnected, our challenges and strengths, and what can we do to be more inclusive and welcoming.



Unsurprisingly, our meeting brought up a wide range of thoughts, memories, ideas, along with important new questions, such as: is Zoom connecting or disconnecting us (or both)? How do we want our members, friends, and visitors to feel when they encounter our congregation? How do we create a climate of belonging? Issues that surfaced

during the discussion included challenges with our physical space; a range of thoughts about our social hour; connections with the denomination, beliefs, and principles; being needed and being asked; relationships formed during social and committee time together; appreciation of our children's experience in religious education, the natural ebb and flow of connectedness to congregational work and worship; connecting and disconnecting moments and interactions; and more. We particularly noted the work of the Newcomer Connections and the Welcoming Teams, who work hard to create connections with visitors and new members. All fuel for further action steps and activities.

On another topic, the Board reviewed the congregational feedback to the proposal to move historical documents and the painting of Charles Burleigh to Forbes Library. We have approved the proposal to move historical documents to the library and feel assured they will be accessible, well cared for, and stored in an appropriate historical context. We will continue to think through next steps with the painting. Thanks to the many folks who shared your thoughts about this process.

Sara Hunt, Board member

Increase the Impact of Your Pledge to USNF

Here's a little-known way to save taxes and/or increase the impact of your pledge. If you are old enough and have the means to do so, you may wish to explore a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) with your tax preparer or investment advisor. Click [here](#) for this and other [tax-saving strategies](#).

Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD)

If you plan to withdraw funds from an IRA and are 70 ½ or older, there are significant tax

benefits if you make your annual USNF donation with a QCD. Those eligible can draw from their IRA to pay their pledge and avoid income tax on the distribution. There's a December 31 deadline for this year's tax savings.

To do this, you instruct your investment firm to pay your pledge with a QCD check to the Unitarian Society. Your entire donation can be excluded from your federal and state taxable income, whether or not you itemize deductions.

If you are 72 or older, you are probably aware that the IRS imposes a required minimum distribution (RMD) from your tax-deferred retirement accounts. Anyone who is obligated to take a larger required minimum distribution than they actually need for living expenses can really benefit from using the QCD option for their charitable contributions.

And, because of the tax savings, you could consider increasing your pledge without any increase in the total cost to you. Please contact [Craig Dreeszen, Jon Sass](#), or [Dave Nelson](#) to learn how easy this is.



RE Holiday Card Fundraiser



The Religious Education classes have once again made beautiful holiday cards for sale. The students will donate the profits to causes of their choosing: animals, people who are homeless, toys for kids, Afghan evacuees, and mental illness resources and support.

Order your cards here [Holiday Card Fundraiser](#).

You will receive a follow up email confirming your order and providing payment instructions. Cards will be available for pick up or delivery starting next week. All orders are due by December 17.

Supporting Afghan Evacuees & Refugees

The *Center for New Americans* and *Catholic Charities* are local agencies with the mission to help immigrants and refugees to integrate into the local community. Both agencies have been working hard to support evacuees and refugees from Afghanistan. There are many ways you can help.

Some of you have joined a Catholic Charities Circle of Care to support individuals or a family to adjust to life in the United States. These volunteers provide assistance in almost every possible way, from helping with transportation at first, setting up doctor's appointments, and registering children for school. If you are interested in joining a circle of care, you can email minister@uunorthampton.org

There are other ways you can aid these newest members of our community:

- Do you have an apartment you can rent to these newcomers?
- Can you help clothe them? Important Note: Catholic Charities is asking for gift cards to JC Penney, Walmart and Target instead of clothing donations. They have run out of space for storage.
- Do you have an iPad collecting dust that you would like to donate so students can connect to online English classes?
- Do you want to give a donation to support these organizations?

Thank you for supporting our new neighbors,
Peg Johnson, pegrij@cnam.org

USNF Member & CNA Enrollment & Assessment Coordinator

Center for New Americans: <https://cnam.org/>

Catholic Charities: <http://diospringfield.org/11995-2/>

**Film screening and panel discussion of the movie
Dreaming of a Jewish Christmas!
December 11, at 7:00 p.m**

Beit Ahavah, the Reform Synagogue of Greater Northampton, invites you to join

them. The event is to be held indoors in the BA sanctuary (130 Pine St, Florence), with masks, ages 12+ must be vaccinated. [Watch a trailer.](#) [Register here](#), or tickets are available, \$5-10 each, at the door.

Welcoming New Music Director Ellen Cogen and Guest Minister Reverend Julie-Ann Silberman-Bunn December 12, 2021

Please join us on December 12 to welcome our new Music Director Ellen Cogen! Our service will be hosted by the Reverend Janet Bush, and our speaker will be the Reverend Julie-Ann Silberman-Bunn.



Rev. Julie-Ann has served as a Parish Minister, Religious Educator, Hospice Chaplain, and Hospital Chaplain. Most recently, she joined the team at New England Hospice serving Western Massachusetts. She is also part-time Assistant Minister at the Unitarian Universalist Society of Greater Springfield. A lifetime UU and author of chapters in *Everyday Spiritual Practice* and *Living a Call*, Julie-Ann reflects frequently on what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist and on evolving her understanding of faith and spiritual practices. Julie-Ann and her husband Ken live in their forever home, a cabin in the hilltowns, with their rescued Maine Coon cat Kattia.

For the rest of December's worship schedule you can go to the USNF website worship page, here: <https://uunorthampton.org/worship/upcoming-services>

December Spiritual Discussion Group *Opening to Joy* Wednesday, Dec 15, 10 am - 1 pm



Let's explore joy together. How do you open to joy? What brings you joy? Join with others from the congregation to discuss and share joy!

<https://zoom.us/j/98681411085>

Meeting ID: 986 8141 1085, One tap
mobile+13017158592,,98681411085# US (Washington
DC), Dial by your location +1 646 876 9923 US

These groups happen monthly, you can find the schedule here: [Spiritual Discussion Group Schedule](#). For more information, contact Jessica at dre@uunorthampton.org.

Learn more on our website: [USNF Adult Education Offerings](#)

Beacon Schedule

The *USNF Beacon* is published on Tuesdays with featured articles appearing each week. The monthly schedule is:

Week 1 - Minister's Notes
Week 2 - Board Report
Week 3 - Committee Reports and Articles
Week 4 - Religious Education and Faith Development
Week 5 - Editor's choice for months with 5 Tuesdays

Articles/photos are due the Friday before the week they are to be published. Articles should be 250 words max. For longer articles, please contact the editor.

Note: The Beacon will not be published on December 28, 2021.

Send submissions, **with the word Beacon in the subject line** to:
newsletter@uunorthampton.

**Contact
Us**



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Office Hours: Mon., Tues., and Thurs., 9 AM - 3 PM, but please call before coming.
Partner of the Unitarian Congregation in Homoródkarácsonyfalva, Transylvania (Romania)