

BUUC NEWSLETTER

Brookfield Unitarian Universalist Church
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"The Little Stone Church That Rocks"



NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

It was the first Sunday of the regular church year, Stone Communion. People were chatting together before services began, glad to see each other after a summer apart from one another. They were together in a small church that was in a small, conservative leaning town, just like most of the other towns surrounding it.

A regular part of all services was the sharing of Joys and Concerns, either in silence or aloud at the front of the church. Everyone there knew everyone else, and people sometimes shared joys and concerns as if they were talking to close friends. A teenager walked to the front of the church. In a strong voice, she announced that she was trans, and she named her preferred pronouns and her preferred name. There were joyful hugs and warm applause. Immediately after that another teenager announced that she, too, was trans, and she named her preferred pronouns and preferred name. Same response as before. Unbelievably, immediately after that yet another teenager announced that they were nonbinary, adding their preferred pronouns and preferred name. As the applause rang out, everyone had smiles on their faces. Then, the service continued, as if nothing unusual had just happened.

Where could three teenagers share such intensely personal information in front of a large group of people, each one knowing in their hearts that it was safe to share with each one of them? Where could they know that they would be accepted unconditionally and loved just as they were? In the little town of Brookfield, in the only church in town that had had a large Pride flag hanging above its front doors for many years—the Little Stone Church That Rocks.



Two years later, the political environment has become much more conservative, and it is only going to get worse after January 20th. At this moment Congress is twisting itself into knots being as cruel as possible to Sarah McBride, the first trans woman elected to Congress. They are obsessed with their concern about which bathroom she should use. And

*A Welcoming Congregation
and a Green Sanctuary*

*We are a fellowship of seekers
after truth, bound by no dogma,
restricted by no creed.*

OUR AFFIRMATION

TOGETHER: We unite in an atmosphere of care and support to foster spiritual health and growth.

TOGETHER: We focus on sharing our ideas and histories, with warmth, hope, loving friendship and an open mind.

TOGETHER: We nurture stability for our daily lives and seek motivation to reach out to the larger community.

the incoming government is plotting to withhold Medicare and Medicaid payments to hospitals that perform gender affirming surgery, meaning that those hospitals would close. The deprivation of trans rights and the rights of anyone who dares claim to be gender nonconforming appear to be the most important issues right now; I have never seen such a large group of mostly very old white men so perversely interested in everyone else's genitalia. So, what does this mean for the youth mentioned above? It means the world is a less safe place for them. BUUC is not a luxury for them, or for other people who, too, find themselves as out of the more narrow norms; BUUC is an absolute necessity, providing a safe haven for all who seek it.

I believe that we are humming along as we usually do, relying on our sense of community to nurture and sustain each other. As I write this, the Search Team is working diligently on our ministerial application for a half time minister for the 2025-2026 church year. Exec is hopeful that we will be able to afford a minister next year. Based upon unfulfilled pledges last year, we collected just 90% of what was pledged. And, we were informed that \$8000 that was pledged for our current year will not be fulfilled. Yes, our current budget was created assuming that the \$8000 would be collected. I fear that very few people know about this deficit, as it was discussed at the Annual Meeting in June, and not many people attended the meeting. Our budget this year is not a typical one, as we aren't paying a minister this year. We can't keep balancing our budget by taking money out of our trust fund, which was necessary last year. Therefore, I am asking each one of you to please consider contributing more than you have pledged to cover our deficit. Three people have added to their current year pledges, which is a good start. If you can see your way to increasing your current pledge, please let Dave Yutzler, our fantastic collector, know. Dave is at church every week. You can also email him at buuc.collector@gmail.com. Or you could put a donation in an envelope in the collection plate, noting it is for closing our deficit.

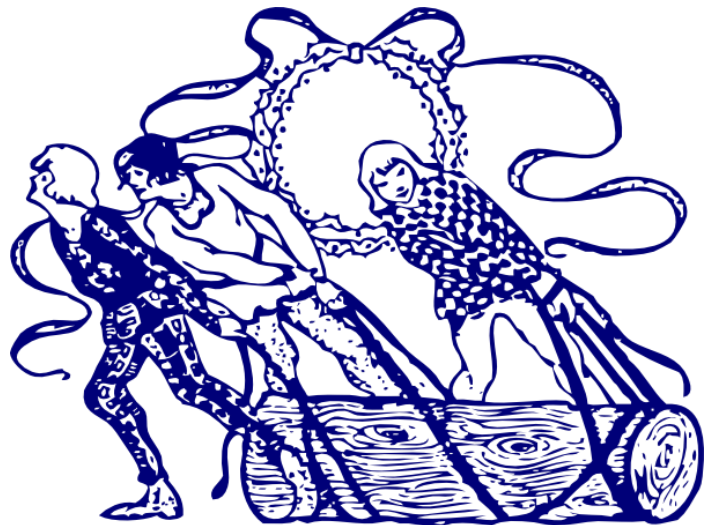
And, the answer to your question is absolutely not—I do not enjoy talking about church finances at all. But I want us to be able to hire a minister next year, and that requires discussing church finances. I will continue to work on our ministerial application, remaining optimistic that we will all rise to the occasion. Let's get this done!

Wishing all of you joyous holidays,

Robyn

DECEMBER GRATITUDE

This month we are grateful for our shared community during Fellowship Hour.



MUSIC NOTES



In troubled times two quotes always come to my mind: The first is from Leonard Bernstein. *"This will be our reply to violence: To make music more intensely, more beautifully, more devotedly than ever before."*

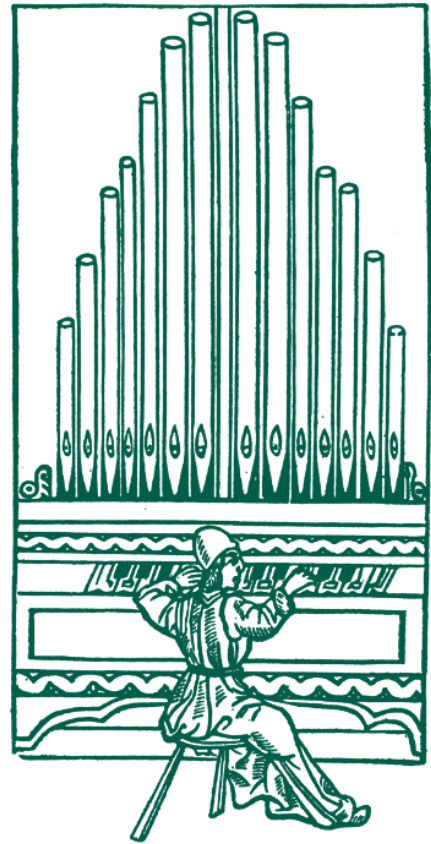
The second is from Yo Yo Ma (which I paraphrase here because I can't find the exact quote nor do I remember which specific world tragedy he was responding to). He said that music doesn't give us answers, but it helps us deal with the questions. With this in mind I invite you to stop and consider turning to music in these hectic and troubled times.

Here at BUUC we strive to live up to Bernstein's words, preparing music for Sunday Worship. Beyond that, December is a month with an abundance of live music performances. You can start with your local school holiday concerts. For example, Tantasqua High School's Winter Concert is Dec. 18. Several members of the BUUC choir will perform with the Wings of Song community chorus Dec. 14 and 15. Remember the little organ in the corner of the Church Parlor is the place to look for flyers about concerts. And when you have a flyer to post that is the place to put it. Also consider music and art when shopping for gifts. And keeping it local, remember we have musicians in our community that have CDs for sale!

Yo Yo Ma also said, *"In a world filled with noise, music provides a sanctuary for the soul. It is a refuge where we can find peace, solace, and inspiration."*

May it be so for you at this holiday season and all year long.

Lila M Farrar,
Music Director



COMMITTEE FOR ECOLOGY & SOCIAL ACTION

In light of the recent election results, CESA will not be meeting in December. We are taking the time to spend with family and rest and grieve and get ready to move forward in January 2025. We will be looking for ways to support our UU values in our community and beyond.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to contact Penny Blum at quabbinquilter@gmail.com or any member of CESA.

NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION



During my first summer as the Director of Religious Exploration for the BUUC, I decided to use the extra time to declutter, clean, and organize the various RE spaces. This was important to me for a few reasons. What did we have? I didn't know, and I didn't want to buy more of something if we already had plenty of it. Also, I genuinely enjoy cleaning and organizing. So many of life's problems are tangled up with no clear starting and stopping point. Cleaning

and organizing can be the opposite, and I appreciate the time spent on active rest to brainstorm other projects.

I separated the various zones and got to work. I focused on the office and the Exploration Space in my first year. In the second year, I focused on books. In the third year, I cleaned out the cupboards in the Exploration space and was able to move some things out of the office and into the cupboards.

Last summer, I focused on the craft cabinets. When I started, three cabinets were full of craft supplies such as markers, paints, and tape. However, one of the cupboards was falling apart and no longer structurally sound. Amy Frisella kindly volunteered to remove it, leaving me with two cabinets. Brigid helped me determine which paints, markers, and pens were past their prime. I discerned which items would actually be used and donated the rest. The shelves were cleaned, and I broke out one of my favorite tools, my label maker. I labeled to my heart's content. One cabinet was designated for regularly used items, and the other for lesser-used items and extra stock of the more frequently used things. Thinking of author Gretchen Rubin's words, I left one cubby empty. "An empty shelf shows that I have room to expand—I'm not crowded in by my stuff, I have order and space," she writes.

Next summer, I will clean the final zone: the true "basementy" area of the basement. I poked in a little last summer to create a clear path to the mechanicals, and the office is a disaster again. That's okay. I'll start another pass in the summer of 2026, continuing to make room for our religious exploration to grow and expand.

Cara Wales,

DRE



RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION CALENDAR



December 1: Regular Sunday

December 8: RE Family Walk; Games at BUUC

December 15: Regular Sunday

December 22: Intergenerational Winter Solstice Service

December 24: Intergenerational Christmas Eve Service, 4p

December 29: Regular Sunday

THE NEW UU CLASS

Thank you to everyone who has said that they are interested in the New UU Class, a class for adult religious exploration that is great for people who are new to Unitarian Universalism, would like a refresher, or simply enjoy taking classes and the fellowship it engenders.

After looking at the survey data, many people requested that we wait until after the holidays and meet over Zoom. Sessions will last 60 - 90 minutes. Here are the dates:

- ❖ *Session One: January 7 at 6:30p*
- ❖ *Session Two: January 21 at 6:30p*
- ❖ *Session Three: February 4 at 6:30p*
- ❖ *Session Four: February 18 at 6:30p*
- ❖ *Session Five: March 4 at 6:30p*
- ❖ *Session Six: March 18 at 6:30p*

If you are interested in this class and are not yet on my email list for it, please contact me at c.l.c.wales@gmail.com or 774-230-1398.

Also, another adult RE class will be announced in the New Year. Good things are percolating...stay tuned!

Joyfully,

Cara Wales, Director of Religious Exploration

GINGERBREAD SUNDAY

Get ready for Gingerbread Sunday! *December 8th following the service.* Put on your artistic baking gloves and create a Gingerbread House by yourself, with friends, or as a family to display at the BUUC until Christmas.

A whole house too much? Feel free to bake and decorate gingerbread cookies to share or create another yummy dish with ginger to contribute to coffee hour. If we are overwhelmed with goodies we can offer goodie bags to remember each other in the week to come.



PANERA FUNDRAISER

Join us at the Sturbridge Panera on *December 9th* from 4:00 to 8:00 for a fundraising event. Show them the Panera BUUC flyer when you order and they will donate 20% of what you spend to BUUC. Gift cards are not included.

See you at Panera!

BUUC'S WINTER SOLSTICE CELEBRATION

Join us for an evening of friends, food, and fun as we gather to sing and celebrate the turning point in the year when the days become their shortest and the night its longest, and we look to the light which comes from within ourselves and from each other to sustain us through our darkest times.

Saturday, Dec. 21, 2024

6pm Potluck Dinner and Hot Mulled Cider (basement)

7pm Winter Solstice Spiral Walk (outside)

During the Winter Solstice Spiral Walk ceremony, we will be singing simple, community circle songs all together for the duration of the spiral walk ceremony. There will be song books with lyrics available for you to use during the ceremony. You may choose to sing, or not. If you have a song we can sing together to share, please do.

If anyone is interested in learning and practicing some of the songs beforehand, please contact Jamie Bishop and we'll schedule a date or two to have a sing around.

For more info email, text, or call:

Jamie Bishop

JamieBishop923@gmail.com

413-923-7559



GAMES AT THE BUUC

The Membership Committee would like to invite everyone to come **PLAY games**. WHY??? Because there is fun, laughter, and community when we gather and play together. We will be offering game times some Friday nights and some Sunday afternoons. Upcoming dates are:

- ❖ SUNDAY DECEMBER 8th after service
- ❖ FRIDAY, JANUARY 10th at 6:30pm
- ❖ SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9th after service

On Friday nights, drinks and goodies are welcome. On Sundays, please bring a brown bag lunch. And **ALWAYS** feel free to bring games and good cheer.

HOLIDAY COAT DRIVE

CESA and the BUUC are partnering with ACE (African Community Education in Worcester, MA) to help keep their community warm throughout the winter months. The goal is 15 toddler coats and up to 75 adult coats - new or lightly used. Laurel Hemmer is the main contact. Please call, text, or email her for more information: 774-239-8969 or laurelsquilts@msn.com.

DECEMBER SERVICES

Sunday morning services are held at 10:30 am.

- December 1:** "Being Present with the Presence"
Worship Leader: Gary Blanchard
Music: BUUC Choir
- December 8:** "Calm on the Listening Ear"
Worship Leader: Rev. Maddie Sifantus
Music: Linda Friedmann and Roxann Smith,
hammered dulcimers
- December 15:** "Grief & Gratitude"
Worship Leader & Music: Matt Meyer
- December 22:** Intergenerational Solstice Service
"Season of Dreams"
Worship Leader: Cara Wales, DRE
Music: BUUC Choir
- December 24: IG Christmas Eve Service at 4:00pm**
"Keeping Christmas"
Worship Leader: Cara Wales, DRE
Music: BUUC Choir
- December 29:** "Finding Quiet at the End of the Year"
Quiet Service in the Spirit of the Quakers
Worship Leader: Cruger Johnson Phillips

A Note About Worship

Currently we are holding hybrid services (in-person and streaming) as often as tech volunteers are available. For those who wish to stream the service (attend online) a link will be provided via email. If you'd like to volunteer to be one of our ZOOM Geeks, email Barb Hale at b.lambert.hale@gmail.com.

PASTORAL CARE

If you are in need of pastoral care, please contact Rev. John Pastor at 978-724-0225.

The Lay Pastoral Care Team has been training to provide extra support for the BUUC community. Members Gary Blanchard, Laurel Hemmer, Cruger Johnson Phillips, and Cara Wales can meet with you in person, over the phone, or via Zoom. Please contact Cara Wales (c.l.c.wales@gmail.com; 774-230-1398) to request lay pastoral care, and one of us will get back to you.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Women's Alliance

The Woman's Alliance will meet after the service on Sunday, December 1st to discuss the winter's solstice celebration and other plans. Your ideas and participation are most welcome. For more information contact Donna Sullivan at sully-3@charter.net or at 508-867-7036.

Stone Soup

Wednesday, December 4th at 12:00pm. Come catch up with friends and have lunch together. Attendees are invited to bring their lunch. Coffee and tea will be provided.

Games at BUUC

Sunday, December 8th, following coffee hour. Pack a brown bag lunch and come play games downstairs together!

Book Club

The BUUC Book Discussion Group will be meeting via ZOOM on Tuesday, December 10th at 7:00pm to discuss *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. Please feel free to attend. A complete list of this year's books can be found on our website at www.buuc.org/events. If you have any questions, please contact Barbara Hale at b.lambert.hale@gmail.com.

Choir Practice

6:55-8:30pm each Thursday.
Contact Music Director Lila M. Farrar at lilamfarrar@gmail.com or 508-864-5978.

Executive Committee

First Monday of the month at 6:30pm.

WE RISE: SOCIAL JUSTICE RESOURCES PAGE

For those who feel called by our faith to take the side of human worth and dignity through social action, go to www.buuc.org and click the tab "We Rise: Social Justice Resources" on the menu at the left side of the page.

INTERESTED IN MEMBERSHIP AT BUUC?

Unitarian Universalism is a covenantal faith making membership in our community both simple and challenging. It is simple in that to become a member all that is generally required is signing the membership book. It is challenging because that is not all that is asked of our members. In addition to honoring our congregational covenant, as a member you would be asked to:

- Worship in community regularly
- Work faithfully on your own spiritual development
- Be involved in a ministry of service to others
- Share your financial resources as stewards of the present and future of this religious community
- Continue to learn and connect to the wider movement of Unitarian Universalism
- Assume responsibility for offering the genuine hospitality of this community to all who come here.

Visitors and friends curious to know more or who are considering becoming a member of BUUC are invited to contact president Robyn Vincent at 774-230-6623 or robynbuuc@yahoo.com.

OUR COVENANT

As we share our lives in this place of blessed community, we promise to unite in an atmosphere of care and support, provide a spiritual home for ourselves and our children, and work together in our search for truth and caring ways to be in community with each other, both within and beyond these walls.

We seek to embody a welcoming community of

CARING, SUPPORT, AND SERVICE

We therefore promise to:

- Treat each other with respect, trust, and compassion
- Actively listen to all points of view on important issues
- Create an open environment for nonjudgmental participation
- Honor dissenting views, agreeing to disagree
- Make decisions with as much participation as possible
- Accept that we will make mistakes, forgive each other, and move on
- Express gratitude for the efforts of others
- Work together to live by our Covenant; and
- Try to the best of our ability to live by our Unitarian Universalist Principles and Purposes, affirming our tradition of service and justice for all.

**Adopted by the members of
BUUC May 20, 2012**

WHO'S WHO AT BUUC

Staff

Director of Religious Exploration
Cara Wales

Music Director
Lila M. Farrar

Office Assistant
Emily Foster

Executive Committee

President
Robyn Vincent

Treasurer
Roxann Smith

Clerk
Colleen Groner

Members-at-Large
Fritzi Foster, Christine Holbrook,
Sharon Smith, Cruger Johnson Phillips

Collector
Dave Yutzler

Committees and Groups

Worship Committee
Barb Hale (chair), Roxann Smith,
John Kennison, David Yutzler,
Linda Friedmann, Lila Farrar

Flower Committee
Lila Farrar (chair), Judy Trifone,
Donna Sullivan

Membership Committee
Joanne Hamerly, Donna Boyea,
Penny Blum, Alix McNitt,
Robyn Vincent, Karen Goudey,
Laurel Hemmer

Nominating Committee
Joanne Hamerly, Donna Boyea,
Karen Keough-Huff

Women's Alliance
Donna Sullivan (chair), Donna
Boyea, Barb Hale, Joanne Hamerly,
Laurel Hemmer, Laurie Magnuson,
Sharon Smith, Judy Trifone,
Diane Mossa

Committee for Ecology and Social
Action (CESA)

Penny Blum (chair), Joanne
Hamerly, Donna Boyea, Laurel
Hemmer,
Sarah Swift, Barb Hale, Lila Farrar,
Emily Foster, Alix McNitt,
Kathleen Walker

Trustees
Doug Smith, Kirk Upton,
Linda Friedmann

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

At the heart of Unitarian Universalism is a deep recognition and respect for the interconnectedness of life. As a faith community, Brookfield Unitarian Universalist Church seeks to foster spiritual health and growth, but we also recognize that it is equally important to encourage and empower one another to lives of physical, mental, and emotional health and well-being. To that end, we have launched our Community Resources page. To access the page visit <http://www.buuc.org/community-resources.html>.

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UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST CHURCH**

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