

Unitarian Universalist Society: East

Member of the Clara Barton District of the Unitarian Universalist Association



Unitarian Universalist Society: East is a welcoming, open-minded, spiritual community seeking truth and meaning in its many forms. We share responsibility for building a more equitable, peaceful, and sustainable world.

Editor's Note: due to COVID-19 precautions, UUS:E has closed the Meetinghouse for all activities. Only staff members will enter the building until further notice.

Check our website and watch for email eblast notices for updates. <http://uuse.org>

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Sunday Services Schedule

December Ministry Theme: Stillness

In December we continue to hold one virtual worship service every Sunday morning at 10:00 AM. For the time being our Sunday services will be held using Zoom. Our Zoom login and call-in information will be shared through the congregational eblast. If you are not subscribed to the congregational eblast, please send a message to e-news@uuse.org or contact Annie Gentile in the UUS:E office to arrange another method of receiving relevant information.

December 6: "Let the Stillness Carry Us."

Our worship theme for December is **Stillness**. Nancy Thompson will deliver the homily and Barnard College senior Clare DiMaiolo will present her reflections on this intriguing theme.

Coordinators: Beth Hudson-Hankins and Sheila Foran

December 13: "Living Like Julian."

And all shall be well...." Famous words from Julian of Norwich, an English mystic of the Middle Ages and author of the first English language book known to be written by a woman. What might her way of life say to us in this beautifully dark season in this extraordinarily difficult year?

Coordinators: Gina Campellone and Rev. Josh Pawelek

December 20: "Gloria in Excelsis Deo."

Our annual holiday music service! All are welcome as we honor the holiday season with beautiful music and compelling reflections.

Coordinators: Mary Bopp, Gina Campellone, Rev. Josh Pawelek

Thursday, December 24: "Peace on Earth, Good Will to All."

Join us for Christmas Eve worship. One service at 7:00 PM.

Coordinators: Mary Bopp, Gina Campellone, Rev. Josh Pawelek

December 27: "A Celebration of Kwanzaa."

This morning we join the Unitarian Society of Hartford for a celebration of Kwanzaa, led by ministerial intern (and good friend of Rev. Josh's) Dianne Daniels. Kwanzaa is an annual celebration of African American culture which is held from December 26 to January 1. It was created by Maulana Karenga and first celebrated in 1966.

January 3: "Happy New Year!"

This morning we join the Unitarian Society of New Haven (in Hamden) for the first Sunday service of 2021. We will have an opportunity to meet USNH's newly called minister, the Rev. Lindasusan Ulrich.

2020 – 2021 Ministry Themes

<https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/themes.html>

September	Renewal
October	Deep Listening
November	Healing
December	Stillness
January	Imagination
February	Beloved Community
March	Commitment
April	Becoming
May	Story
June	Play

Community Outreach Ministry

Charitable Giving for December 2020

As always, thank you for your generosity.

"We do not gather our gifts only for ourselves, but to share with the larger community."

Continuing our practice of sharing our gifts with the community beyond our walls, fifty percent of our Sunday plate collections for the month of December will go to three area shelters: McKinney Men's Shelter (Hartford), East Hartford Community Shelter, Cornerstone Shelter (Rockville).

Please contact Louisa Graver at lgraver163@gmail.com, David Lacoss, or Nancy Madar at nancymadar@hotmail.com.

Checks made out to UUS:E will be treated as follows. If the memo line:

- ✓ is blank or "pledge" is written, all will go toward your pledge.
- ✓ has "COM" or the name of the charity is on the memo line, all will go to the charity.
- ✓ has "1/2 pledge, 1/2 COM," it will be divided equally.

The Minister's Column: Hallelujah!

Dear Ones,

Our ministry theme for December is **stillness**. I can't imagine a more essential theme for us in this beautifully dark season in this extraordinarily difficult year. A pandemic rages around us. Our safety—and the safety of our communities—depends on our staying home as much as possible, staying isolated as much as possible, and restricting our movements in the wider community as much as possible. Our safety depends on our capacity to remain still.

As we commenced our congregational year back in September, I was fairly confident the coronavirus would come surging back in New England with the arrival of colder weather. I wasn't confident because I had some special knowledge or inside information. Every infectious disease specialist in the country, along with doctors, nurses and public health officials were predicting we'd be here now. This was public knowledge. And the experts were telling us what to do to limit the worst-case scenarios: wear masks, avoid large indoor gatherings, stay socially distant, wash hands often. My goal here is not to lay blame for this largely avoidable public health crisis. Laying blame won't change reality at this point. What's done is done. We are where we are as a nation. Our challenge is to stay safe, vigilant, resilient, patient ... and still.

In a meditation entitled, "There is a Time to Let Go," my colleague, the Rev. Gretchen Haley, counsels us to "study stillness and joy." I like the way Rev. Haley links these two states of being—stillness and joy—as if one lives within the other, and vice versa. So often stillness and joy feel like two separate experiences of the holiday season. We typically encounter holiday joy in gatherings of family and friends, in holiday parties, in singing in the holiday choir, in our holiday music and Christmas Eve services—in being together. We encounter stillness when the sun sets at 4:00 PM, when the snow falls gently on newly frozen ground, when we wake early into the darkness of the pre-dawn, when Christmas lights around the neighborhood touch that ancestral knowledge deep in us—that knowledge that the sun returns, that our working toward a better world is not in vain.

This year, of course, the usual sources of seasonal joy are limited, mostly to Zoom. Our usual

opportunities for hugs, touch, eye contact, cooking together, sharing meals, giving gifts and singing are actually dangerous this year. We need to find joy through other avenues. It's time to study stillness and joy.

Can you find joy in the stillness? I hope you can. I hope you can study stillness and joy, as Rev. Haley advises. I hope you can discover how stillness and joy live within each other. In the absence of physical connection and togetherness, I hope you can find the peace and contentment that come with being still. I hope you can encounter the many ways the sacred speaks through silence. I hope you can experience how the darkness holds, consoles and nurtures us. And within all of it, I hope you find joy.

I wish you a Merry Christmas, a Happy Hanukah, a blessed solstice, and a happy New Year. Through it all I encourage you to study stillness. And I pray that you find joy in that stillness.

With love,

—Rev. Josh

Josh



Enter, rejoice, and come in!

A Religious Education message from Gina

Dear Friends,

I love the winter holiday season. I love the lights—both the bright, colorful ones and the soothing, subdued white ones. I love our family's annual trek to the nursery to choose the perfect Christmas tree, and I love the way its fresh, balsam scent fills our home for weeks to come. I love baking the special treats that I only ever make at Christmas time—Italian wine biscuits and Magic Cookie Bars. I love addressing holiday cards, crafting handmade gifts, filling mason jars with goodies, and packaging them up with ribbon to be surreptitiously delivered to the doorsteps of loved ones. And what I love most of all is gathering together to celebrate with family and dear friends.

Of course, figuring out how to safely celebrate the holidays during a global health pandemic requires some creative adaptations. Initially, the prospect of not being physically together with all of my family felt unbearable. But after shedding some tears of anger, frustration, and sadness, I'm now much more at peace with the situation. While not ideal, I'm grateful that there are options for virtual connections via Zoom or Facetime. Such technology has served as a lifeline in keeping families, friends, classrooms, and congregations connected over the past eight months, and I know that our family will rely on it heavily this holiday season.

Many of UUS:E's beloved holiday traditions must also be reimagined and adapted this year. Some events, such as community caroling, the Youth Group's trip to Bright Lights, and the RE program's annual celebration of Hanukkah with latkes and applesauce just can't happen this year. While other traditions, like the fair, the Holiday Music Service, and Christmas Eve worship have been adapted to take place virtually. And, if there's a silver lining to be found, it's that having to cancel some traditional holiday events has inspired us to create some new ones!

We hope that you will join us in December for some (or better yet, all) of the following events:

Sunday, Dec. 6 at 7 PM: Holiday Story Time! Put on some comfy jammies, get yourself a bedtime snack, and cozy around your computer screen as

Rev. Josh, Gina, and Heather share with you some of their favorite holiday books.

Sunday, Dec. 13 at 10 AM: In keeping with December's ministry theme, "stillness," we've created a virtual worship service based on the story of Julian of Norwich, whose propensity for stillness allowed her to hear some very special messages from God, including the most well-known message, "All shall be well." The story will be brought to life with the artwork of one of our Junior Youth, Sadie Nitzan.

Sunday, Dec. 20 at 10 AM: Our wildly popular Holiday Music Service goes virtual! Mary Bopp and the Music Committee will bring us the magic of the season with musical selections, both vocal and instrumental, performed by UUS:E's talented musicians, including kids and families! It's not too late to be a part of it. Contact Mary Bopp if you'd like to submit a video.

Monday, Dec. 21: Celebrate the first day of winter with a Winter Solstice Make & Take activity pack. Make & Take packs will include a lesson about Solstice, a cool craft, and a sweet treat. Packs will be available to pick up from UUS:E in advance. Sign up is required! More info will be forthcoming.

Thursday, Dec. 24: Christmas Eve worship, including a virtual Christmas Pageant starring all of YOU! At least we hope it will be starring all of you! Unlike our usual "no rehearsal pageant," which requires your actual presence on Christmas Eve, this one will be filmed in advance. The more folks who participate, the more fun it will be. Please consider participating! Keep an eye out for details coming soon!

Love and blessings to all this holiday season,
Gina



We Are UUs!

UUnpeeling the Layers

A series to learn more about each other

The Membership Committee has been grappling with how our congregation can stay connected during COVID-19, especially with the winter months keeping us even more isolated. One way we hope to accomplish this is by having a monthly column featuring someone from the congregation willing to share something about themselves and what's important to them.

This month we are interviewing Marianne Cornish, who has been a member since 1991. Hopefully, you will learn some things about Marianne that will surprise and delight you.

Marianne was born in Germany in 1928 and for seven years lived with her grandparents in Austria. In 1938 at the age of ten she travelled alone by train to Italy where she joined her parents who were desperate to leave behind an impending war to seek a new life in the United States. They settled in Brookline, MA and were sponsored by the newly forming American Service Committee. This connection was the family's first introduction to Unitarianism, and for the family it became a life-long commitment. Membership in the Arlington Street Unitarian Church followed; and throughout her teen years Marianne said she practically lived at 25 Beacon Street and was active with the American Unitarian Youth.

Over the years Marianne graduated from the Massachusetts College of Arts, got her masters in Recreation Therapy from UConn, married Glenn Cornish in 1952 and moved to Manchester where she and Glenn raised two children, Alison and Michael. She also was Director of the nursery school at the Manchester YWCA for 20 years.

She has traveled extensively, visiting 35 countries, hoping to learn about their culture and explore their art and native crafts, especially weaving and glass. Some of you may have purchased the beautiful dichroic jewelry she created and sold for years at our annual Holiday Fair.

While crafts are a keen interest, she is also committed to our seven principles, especially the UU principle that respects the interdependent web of all existence. She is a member of the Sustainable Living Committee, the Science and Religion

discussion group, the book group and a small group ministry which she says is important to her as it deepens her relationship with the participants. "We learn so much about each other and that is important to me."

And while, at age 92, she is not as active as she once was, the UU principles are foremost in her mind as she navigates her daily life. And—think about this—on vacation this summer with family, she kayaked on a modified board! Way to go Marianne!

UUS:E Holiday Party

"A Celebration of the Season"

Tuesday, December 22, 7:00 PM



Join us for a virtual UUS:E Holiday Party, Tuesday evening, December 22 at 7:00 PM. Zoom login info will be available in the regular eblasts. Bring some holiday food and beverages to this virtual party, decorate your space for holiday cheer. We'll share holiday traditions and fond memories, maybe some special music, and maybe some surprise guests! Questions: Contact Rev. Josh.

Stop & Shop Cards

Stop & Shop cards can still be purchased despite the pandemic. Anyone who is interested in buying a card can contact Annie, our office administrator. Cards come in \$50, \$100 and \$250 amounts. The money raised from this effort goes into the general fund. And they make great holiday gifts! If you need any help with this or more information, contact Sandy Johnson at 860-888-9673.

The Policy Board's Column

Vivian Carlson on Our Amazing Staff

As chair of the personnel committee and a member of the policy board, I definitely have one of the best volunteer jobs at UUS:E, supporting the wonderful people who work to keep our beloved community running efficiently and vibrantly every day. Since we have not had a chance to get together to celebrate our staff this year, I've collected comments of appreciation about each of them to share in this column. Please take a moment to share your appreciative thoughts the next time you speak with our staff members.

This year has been a challenge beyond all expectations. Job descriptions have changed drastically as the pandemic has altered nearly all aspects of our lives. Nonetheless, our staff has made what looked from the outside like a nearly seamless transition to a closed building and an online interactive world. This has required countless extra hours with endless new skills and daily changes. Their willingness to go the extra mile with grace and dedication is evident in the following reflections from community members.

Every organization has a hidden heroine who keeps everything running, organizes everything, knows exactly what to do and when, who to call and what to say and always has time for anyone who needs her. UUS:E has **Annie Gentile**. Annie has an easy-going style of efficiency. She responds with complete confidence and competence. Annie is forever stepping outside her job description to help with whatever comes past her. Annie supports the work of the committees, especially communication. Her help is invaluable. Annie keeps our community together through all her efforts to keep us informed. We send her our thanks and gratitude.

Jane Osborn is so wonderful at creating a safe space and giving life to a welcoming congregation. And she has a million dollar smile! Jane has made all the virtual services possible by remaining calm, understanding and helpful while also learning new technologies herself. Jane is like the Energizer bunny—with all the chaos around us she keeps the building and grounds in shape so we can return sometime in the future. Jane has worked very closely with volunteers to refine the studio and the hardware and software to provide consistent broadcasts. Jane, thank you for helping us to

connect with others and helping to provide a wonderful place for us to gather when we are able.

Mary Bopp is a wonderful musician who adds so much to UUS:E. Mary has been an inspiration and a refuge in these troubling times with her music. She creates holy unquiet and invites us in. Thank you for all the space you create for our feelings. Music uplifts and brings calm at all times, especially now. We stand in awe of Mary's musical talent. Music flows effortlessly from her to benefit us all. She has created an open, welcoming and eclectic music program. She brings new ideas to the table for the future. She has rolled with the pandemic punches and Zooms with pizzazz. Mary is a vital part of the Sunday Services Committee and finds the perfect music and musicians to enhance the worship services. I love choir, learning the music while also having fun. I appreciate her patience with those of us who do not sight read. She has brought such joy and beauty to UUS:E.

Gina Campellone is a treasure in so many ways. She sends handwritten notes just letting you know that she appreciates and cares about you. I posted her note on my fridge and on some days just seeing that can really make a difference. Gina is a truly kind and compassionate person who cares deeply for others. She is the very best children's book reader EVER! Can I be like her when I grow up? This is a confusing time, especially for children. Gina is helping UUS:E children survive this time and know that they are loved. The children are our future. We send our thanks and support to Gina. The children and parents appreciate her effort. So does everyone else. Gina has become an integral part of most services, and she is always able to find a story that coordinates with the homily. She makes the theme accessible and enjoyable to young and old. Gina is easy to work with and always has a smile.

Heather Alexson is friendly and easy to work with. She genuinely enjoys being with the children and always seems to love her job. Heather is always willing to help and really good at using Zoom with the kids. Heather likes reading stories and helps Gina a lot.

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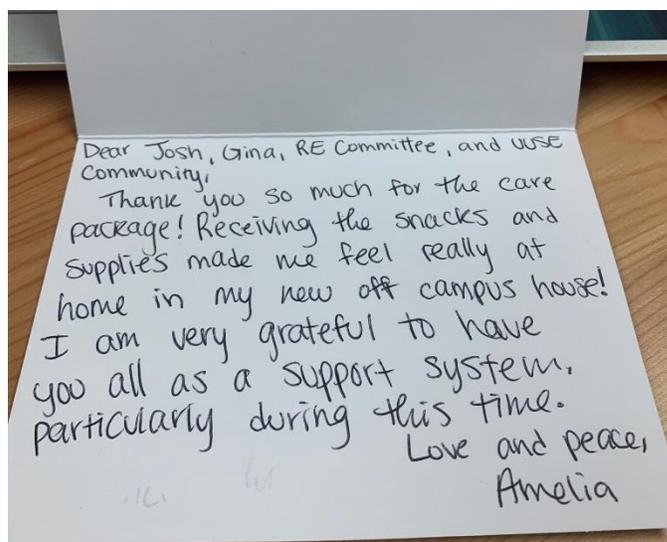
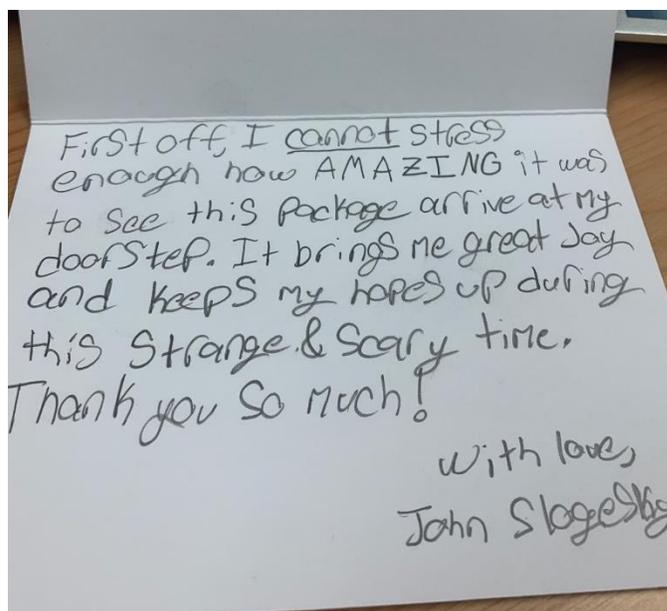
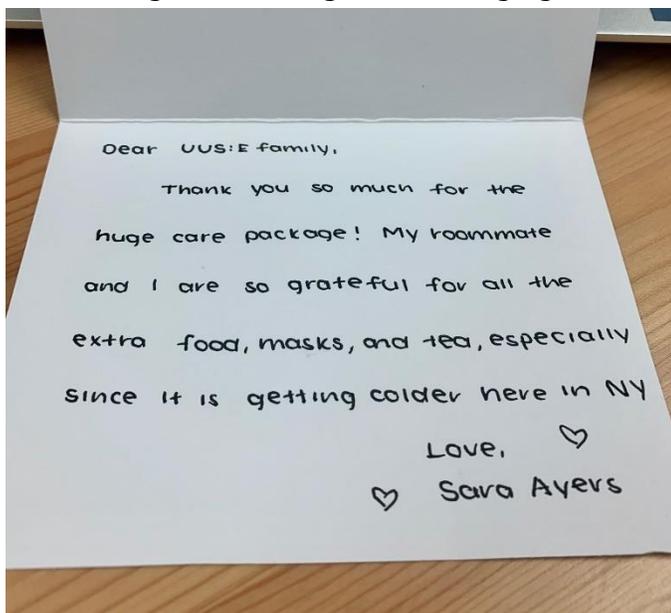
Rev. Josh Pawelek suddenly became the UUS:E tech guru when the pandemic hit in addition to his usual prodigious workload as our fearless leader. Somehow he did so with his usual grace, patience competence and kindness. We appreciate his amazing dedication to our beloved community. We appreciate you, your family and your commitment. Thanks for being a community builder. Josh, thank you for helping us to help others and for always being there for us, no matter how many other things you are involved in. Josh learned a lot about Zoom and helped the lay coordinators learn as well. He was there to help with decisions about virtual services. Even if he was on vacation, Josh was available to help.

Josh speaks to our minds, our consciousness and our souls. He is the calm in the chaos. He brings us much needed hope in the midst of the virus. We appreciate Josh and send our love. He is in our heart.

There are **chairpersons** and **volunteers** whose time and talents keep us moving ahead. We appreciate them all. We are especially grateful to those who reach out to others, to those who live alone or who are dealing with illness. We send heartfelt thanks to those who touch our hearts. They are a blessing to our community. Our community is strong and for all of this we are deeply grateful.

More Thank You Notes from our Young Adults

We are pleased to share the following thank you notes from our young adults who recently received Care Packages from our generous congregation!



Green Sanctuary News

NEW hopes for climate legislation in 2021!!

In May of 2019 at a congregational meeting, UUS:E members voted unanimously to endorse Citizens Climate Lobby's (CCL) preferred solution HR 763, The Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividends Act. However, the last few years of the recent administration left very little room for moving this legislation forward despite its great efforts at bi-partisan support. Now however with a new administration committed to serious climate action, but with a still very divided Congress, we have a far greater chance of moving this legislation forward, and it is possibly the only type of climate legislation that has a chance to pass through both houses. As always it will take great efforts! But we have an excellent opportunity to take part in the **free** virtual conference that CCL is hosting on the afternoons of Dec 5 and 6: **United We Move**. Please check out the information, register, and watch whatever sessions you find interesting! FYI quite a few members and friends of UUS:E have joined and been active in the local Citizens Climate Lobby chapter which we established in 2012 and has become the Greater Hartford chapter. If you check out Citizens Climate Lobby's website at <https://citizensclimatelobby.org/>, be sure to check out the funny little vimeo called "Welcome to the far middle." If you have not done so already you can join on this page and probably connect directly to the conference info upon joining...or just go here to learn about and register for the conference:

United We Move

https://citizensclimatelobby.org/december-2020-online-conference/?utm_term=Learn%20More&utm_campaign=Dec.%202020%20Conf%20invite%20-%20engaged&utm_content=email&utm_source=Act-On+Software&utm_medium=email

Plastic. Since the pandemic hit, how are we doing in terms of our effect on the environment and the climate? Well, we have probably saved some CO2 from entering the atmosphere through far less air travel and driving. We may have used more at home energy to heat and air condition our homes. In my mind I think the worst effect has been the huge increase in waste plastic and packaging materials. So at least try to be conscious of how much of our online purchases, takeout food, and PPE throw-aways are necessary. In January we plan to show a film called "The Story of Plastic,"

which will demonstrate what we all are doing and perhaps give us ideas how to change.

The Story of Plastic. Friday, Jan.15, 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM (or sooner once you have the link) for viewing the movie with joint discussion via Zoom at 7:30 – 8:30 PM. More info next month.

Last but Not Least! December may be your last chance to schedule a FREE Home Energy Audit with its useful services and solutions that can save you hundreds of dollars on energy bills and appliances, etc.

<https://www.energizect.com/your-home/solutions-list/home-energy-solutions-core-services>



Homemade Holiday Music

This is an invitation to musicians and music lovers to contribute your own holiday music videos. These will be presented at the holiday music service and other December services. It can be an instrumental or vocal solo, even just your family singing a holiday song—anything goes. Let's fill this holiday season with good cheer! If interested contact Mary Bopp at music@uuse.org.

Virtual Holiday Choir

Would you like to join holiday choir? Now you can do it from your very own home! Dan Thompson is going to work his magic to create two virtual choir videos for the Holiday Music Service on December 22. If you're interested contact our music director, Mary Bopp at music@uuse.org

UU Connect with You

Would you like another way to connect with others at UUS:E? Members of the Pastoral Friends Committee would like to invite you to join us on Wednesday, December 9, 2020 at 10:00 AM for a Zoom gathering, just to chat. Any members or friends who would like to have a chance to visit are welcome. There is no specific topic; we just want to reach out. We are doing this once a month on different days and at different times. Please join us! The Zoom link will be provided in the weekly Wednesday e-blast.

Open Mic Poetry Night

Saturday, January 9th, 7:00 PM



In conjunction with Power Up Manchester, UUS:E will host a virtual Open Mic Poetry Night on Saturday, January 9 at 7:00 PM. This event will also serve as a fundraiser for Power Up. Watch our regular eblasts for more



information. All poets (professional, amateur, beginning, aspiring, etc.) are encouraged to prepare a poem for this very fun event! Questions: contact Rev. Josh.

Seasonal Help for Verplanck School

The pandemic has really hit the families of our partner school, Verplanck Elementary in Manchester. It was already a "high need" school where the majority of children are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch. Our contact, the Family Resource Coordinator (FRC), tells us that things have gotten worse this year, as parents lose jobs or see their hours cut drastically.

Instead of groceries or individually wrapped gifts, this year we've been asked to contribute \$25 gift cards for Shop-Rite, Stop & Shop, Walmart or Target. Here's how you can help: 1) If you feel comfortable shopping, then buy one or more cards and mail them or stop them off to the UUS:E Office. 2) If you don't feel comfortable shopping, then send a check to UUS:E with Verplanck in the memo line. We will have someone buy gift cards with all the donations that come in. The gift cards or checks need to be received by December 14.

Here is a bit of the note we received from Rachael Clarke, FRC: "I truly appreciate all you and the church have been doing to help our school community. Please stay safe and know that we hold you in our hearts!"

Books, Classes, and Discussions

Adult Religious Education



Book Lovers

The Book Lovers meets second Tuesdays at 3:30 on Zoom. Ask Martha Larson (marlar@wordshard.com) for the Zoom sign in.

- December 8: **Wait Till Next Year**, a memoir by Doris Kearns Goodwin
- January 5: **American Dirt**, by Jeanine Cummins

Buddhist Group



The Buddhist Group meets via Zoom at 7 PM Tuesday, Dec. 1, for meditation and discussion of the December ministry theme, **Stillness**. Stillness is an essential part of Buddhist meditation; practicing it helps us step out of the whirlwind of thoughts and find our calm center. All are welcome; no meditation experience necessary. Contact Nancy Thompson at nancythompson123@yahoo.com for the Zoom info.

UUS:E GENERAL INFORMATION

UUS:E Office Schedule: Monday – Friday, 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Meetinghouse Office: 860-646-5151

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The 20th of Each Month

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