

Unitarian Universalist Society: East

Member of the New England Region 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.

Need a Hard Copy?

If you or someone you know could benefit from receiving a paper copy of this newsletter, please contact Annie at the office at 860-646-5151.

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2022-23 Ministry Themes

September:	Belonging
October:	Courage
November:	Change
December:	Wonder
January:	Finding Our Center
February:	Love
March:	Vulnerability
April:	Resistance
May:	Creativity
June:	Delight



Sunday Services Schedule

December Ministry Theme: Wonder

In December we continue with two Sunday morning services at 9:00 and 11:00 AM We simultaneously broadcasted the 11:00 service in Zoom. (Note that on Christmas morning and New Year's Day there will be single services at 10:00 AM, which will also be broadcasted on Zoom). As always, our Zoom login and call-in information will be shared through the congregational eblasts on Wednesdays and Saturdays. To subscribe to the congregational eblast, please send a message to uuseoffice@uuse.org or contact Annie Gentile in the UUS:E office to arrange another method of receiving relevant information.

Although COVID is still present in the wider community, we currently have no attendance limit. Furthermore, while we continue to recommend wearing masks to indoor events at UUS:E, we no longer require them.

December 4: "Wonder: Igniting Scientific and Spiritual Curiosity."

Do you take time to wonder? Alan Ayers will reflect on how wonder and curiosity have been a lifelong spark for his pursuit of what makes things tick. As we wonder along with him we will ask the questions: Can wonder and curiosity also be an avenue for deepening our spiritual growth? If we take the time to focus on the miraculous and puzzling, how might we deepen our connection with wonder and awe.

Coordinator(s): Alan Ayers and Sande Hartdagen

December 11: "The Darkness Invites Wonder."

Rev. Josh returns to one of his favorite late Autumn themes: finding comfort and respite in the darkness. When all the days are cold and the landscape barren and quiet, what wonderings come to us?

Coordinator(s): Rev. Josh Pawelek

Tuesday, December 13, 7:30 PM: Seasonal Vespers

Join us for an evening of quiet contemplation, reflection and sharing. It's easy to feel out of synch or overwhelmed during the holiday season as it is not a time of busy joy for all of us. This service will acknowledge a wider range of experience including exhaustion, grief, sadness and loneliness. There will be opportunities to share as people are willing.

Join in person or by Zoom. This service is brought to you by the Sunday Services Committee.

Coordinator(s): Beth Hudson Hankins and Vivian Carlson

December 18: "The Wonder of It All."

All-Congregational Worship. Join us for our annual Holiday Music Service, featuring our holiday choir! Through music and story, we ground ourselves in the wonder of the holiday season.

Coordinator(s): Mary Bopp, Gina Campellone and Rev. Josh Pawelek

Saturday, December 24, 7:00 PM: "Silent Night, Holy Night."

All congregation Christmas Eve worship. On this sacred eve, we welcome the spirit and magic of Christmas. And we sing!

Coordinator(s): Mary Bopp, Gina Campellone, Rev. Josh Pawelek

Note: single service at 10:00 AM

December 25, 10:00 AM: "On This Day Everywhere!"

UUS:E celebrates Christmas morning. More stories! More music! More singing!

Coordinator(s): Rev. Josh Pawelek and Mary Bopp

Community Outreach Ministry

Charitable Giving for December 2022

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 the three area shelters (McKinney's Men's Shelter (Hartford), East Hartford Shelter, and 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.

January: Connecticut Domestic Worker Justice Campaign

Enter, rejoice, and come in!

**STOP THE
GLORIFICATION
OF BUSY**

A Religious Education Message from Gina

Dear Friends,

How are you? How've you been? How's life?

If your response to those questions was "Busy," you are not alone. I can't remember the last time I didn't feel busy. Peruse the internet and you'll find no shortage of articles, blog posts, and research studies on the topic. If you spend any time on social media you've likely come across a popular meme that reads "STOP THE GLORIFICATION OF BUSY." We live in a society that prioritizes productivity, demands multi-tasking, and encourages us to "do it all." Busyness has become a status symbol of our time, and we wear it like a badge of honor.

But constant busyness takes a toll on us. It impacts our mental and physical health. It prevents us from being present and in the moment. It denies us opportunities for rest, stillness, and quiet contemplation. It leaves little time for wonder.

And we need wonder in our lives. Perhaps we need it now more than ever. We need opportunities to recognize and appreciate moments of wonder and awe. We need time to steep in the feelings of astonishment, surprise, and curiosity that are all a part of wonder. Just as vitamins and minerals nourish our bodies, wonder nourishes our souls. A healthy, fulfilling, joyful life requires daily doses of wonder. Fortunately, wonder is available to all of us. In fact, it is plentiful. Wonder can be found all around us, even in the most ordinary places, if we are open to it. Imagine what it might be like to live in a society that prioritizes wonder over busyness. Imagine living in a society that no longer requires memes cautioning us to stop the glorification of busy. Imagine living in a society in which our memes simply read "GLORIFY WONDER."

In her poem, *Mindful*, Mary Oliver beautifully describes a life with wonder at its center.

Everyday
I see or hear
something
that more or less
kills me
with delight,
that leaves me
like a needle
in the haystack
of light.

It was what I was born for —
to look, to listen,
to lose myself
inside this soft world —
to instruct myself
over and over
in joy,
and acclamation.
Nor am I talking
about the exceptional,
the fearful, the dreadful,
the very extravagant —
but of the ordinary,
the common, the very drab,
the daily presentations.
Oh, good scholar,
I say to myself,
how can you help
but grow wise
with such teachings
as these —
the untrimmable light
of the world,
the ocean's shine,
the prayers that are made
out of grass?

May this holiday season, and indeed all your days,
be filled with wonder and awe.

Be well & know that you
are loved,

Gina



The President's Column

From Peggy Webbe and Dorothy Bognar

Fair, Thanksgiving, and a word about coordinating events at UUS:E

I know this article is for the December newsletter, but I am writing in November, shortly before Thanksgiving, and our current focus is on gratitude and sharing. This past week as I was in the Meetinghouse preparing for the Fair, I observed generosity in action, as people were delivering the goods being donated to be sold for the benefit of UUS:E. Artisans donated items that they crafted using their time and talent. Numerous people, some even struggling to walk, hand delivered baked goods that we and our customers enjoyed. Finally, we had many donations of treasures, that often belonged to deceased family members. Some of these sold for substantial amounts of money to benefit UUS:E. You made the Fair successful!

Now—Part two of this column. Our talented Music Committee Chair, Dorothy Bognar, helped prepare a protocol (and this article) about coordinating our many UUS:E events and performances, musical and others. At the urging of the UUS:E Music Committee, a group of UUS:E leaders discussed ways to prevent a crowding of similar events from occurring so close in time that the audience for both could be reduced in numbers. Although this protocol applies to all types of events, to illustrate the concern, here are some words from the Music Committee.

Impresarios take note!: Individuals and groups considering offering musical events should check with the Chair of the Music Committee and the Music Director prior to scheduling such events. The Music Committee hopes that organizers carefully consider the amount of time between similar events and the likelihood that all events offered at UUS:E attract the highest number of attendees. The Music Committee carefully plans the spacing of upcoming events and it would like everyone planning a musical event to coordinate efforts with them. There is time devoted at monthly meetings to select, plan, and schedule musical offerings to the Society and the greater surrounding communities, and events that are still in the planning stage, may not even be on the calendar yet for all to see. The best way for those people and groups who are not on the Music Committee to avoid possible conflicts is to check with the

Committee Chair and the Music Director. The group of leaders referred to above has amended the Event Scheduling and News Publicity Process procedure document to read as follows:

UUS:E is a vibrant and active community with numerous events, speakers, concerts, etc. planned on a regular basis. While this is a positive sign of a healthy congregation, occasionally conflicts in timing can occur. In order to avoid conflicts, please follow the following protocol when scheduling an event: 1) Check with Annie to see if the calendar is open at the proposed time; and 2) Avoid scheduling your event too close in time to another event of a similar nature. For instance, if you are planning a musical event that is not scheduled through the Music Committee, check-in with the Music Committee Chair and Music Director to discuss the nature and timing of your event. For non-musical events, consider speaking with the Adult Education Chair, Religious Education Director and Committee Chair, NLDC Chair or the minister, depending on the type of event.



Ladies at Lunch

We will enjoy our December lunch at Birch Hill Tavern, 1320 Manchester Rd, Glastonbury. (It is not far South of the Manchester/Glastonbury town line, at Buckingham, where Highland Park is) We will meet at noon on Friday, December 9. Do join us if you can! Please let Sharon Huber know by Thursday the 8th afternoon if you can attend. Sayhuber@yahoo.com or call/text 860-543-9444.

Read Much?

We know you do. And for UUs, there's nothing quite like a good cup of coffee (or tea!) along with Sunday morning fellowship and a lively conversation about ... you guessed it ... books! The Membership Committee and the book lover's group are teaming up and we'll have a literary surprise for you after the New Year. More details will follow in the January newsletter, but in the meantime, keep reading!

Green Sanctuary News



Keep Warm and Help the Earth!

WINTER IS COMING! Want to **make your home more comfortable** and also **save on energy costs**? Consider participating in EnergizeCT's Home Energy SolutionsSM (HES). As long as you are a residential customer of Eversource, UI, CNG, and SCG, you are eligible to apply! There is a \$50 copay paid at the time of visit, however, if qualifying upgrades are installed, copay may be reimbursed.

GET ENERGY SMART!

(click the link above to watch a quick video so you can learn about the factors of home energy efficiency)

Approximately 43% of your energy budget goes toward heating and cooling, Is your home hot in the summer and cool in the winter? An energy-inefficient home can be a big contributor to high home energy costs and poor temperature control. Luckily, there is an easy and cost-effective way to find these inefficiencies in your home. A home energy assessment will evaluate your home from top to bottom, provide on-the-spot fixes, make recommendations and provide rebates you can use to improve your home's energy use.

The benefits of having an energy-efficient home:

- ✓ **Save money.** You will notice savings on your energy bills each month.
- ✓ **Comfort.** Imagine a comfortable home without hot and cold spots throughout the seasons.
- ✓ **Value.** Having an energy-efficient house is a great selling point and adds value to your home.
- ✓ Most importantly—**you are helping the Earth!** 🌍

10 more ways to winterize your home:

- Clean gutters.
- Cover AC and/or tarp window AC units.
- Eliminate door drafts – use draft guards.
- Ensure that vents are unblocked/unobstructed for better air circulation.

- Prevent pipes from freezing—use insulation.
- Program your thermostat to 68° when you're at home and set it lower when you're asleep or away from home.
- Seal unused fireplace and block the chimney.
- Set ceiling fan direction clockwise to push hot air down.
- Store away garden hoses and insulate outdoor spigots.
- Weather strip windows and doors.



Visitor and Newcomer Poetry Walk

On Sunday, November 13, the UUS:E membership committee hosted a poetry walk for new members and visitors. We met at the 177-acre Bush Hill Farm, Manchester, and walked to a farm pond, pausing to read short poems along the way. Committee members provided snacks and cider at the Land Trust pavilion. Hosts were committee members Sylvia Öunpuu, Louisa Graver, Sheila Foran, Gail Crook, Jacquie Heintz, and Susan Barlow. Guests were Micah Baxter, Paul Cocuzzo, Charlie Eastwood, Sue and Gerry Myers, Eric and Jane Rosenberg, and Stefanie Toise. Special guests were the Rev. Josh Pawelek and Land Trust director Malcolm Barlow. Photo by Jacquie Heintz.



Multigenerational Holiday Card Making

Sunday, December 4, 12:30 – 2:30

Join us on the garden level for a holiday card making workshop. We'll provide all the materials and some sample cards for inspiration, but you are free to create your own unique designs!

We'll have a quick pizza lunch before we start crafting. A contribution of \$2 per participant is requested to help cover the cost of food & supplies.

Advance registration required.

Email Gina at redirector@uuse.org

Last day to sign up is 12/2.

20th Anniversary

Please Join us for a 20th Anniversary Celebration!

Rev Josh Pawelek's Ministry at UUS:E

Date: Sunday, December 11

Time: Immediately following the 2nd Sunday service (approximately 12:15 PM)

Location: UUS:E Sanctuary and Zoom (link will be sent closer to event)

Who: UUS:E Members and Friends of all ages plus some invited members from the community.

Come help celebrate Josh's outstanding ministry and dedication to UUS:E!

Please bring a card or note of thanks to contribute to the gift basket. You may mail your note/card to "Annie Gentile 20th" in advance. 173 West Vernon Street, Manchester, CT 06042

Light refreshments will be provided.



Cocoa & Caroling

Saturday, December 10, 6 – 7 PM at UUS:E

We'll gather around a toasty warm fire in the lower parking lot to sing some traditional Christmas carols and favorite holiday songs.

Hot cocoa will be served!

This is a mutigenerational event. All ages are encouraged to attend!

Hosted by the Religious Education Committee

New Support Group Forming

Navigating Change and Loss Through Reflection and Emotional Expression

Are you navigating change and loss? If so, does the idea of sharing your thoughts, memories, feelings, and emotions (including crying without embarrassment) in a warm, mutual self-help group appeal to you? UUS:E newcomer, Pam Maccabee, is offering to lead such a group. Pam says: "I believe we all, whatever our age, deserve warm and supportive company for grieving—for thinking, remembering, and experiencing the emotions that we may have controlled/suppressed in our emotion-avoidant society." This group will meet at UUS:E, once a week during the day, with no obligation to attend regularly. Interested? Contact Pam at 860-682-3544 or pamelaamaccabee@gmail.com.

The Minister's Column: Hallelujah!

Dear Ones:

Our ministry theme for December is **wonder**. Most of us recognize that the stories, imagery, decorations, and lights associated with the holiday season are designed to fill us not only with a sense of wonder, but also with joy, awe, peace, and the desire to be good people, to be kind to others. My hunch is that, for many of us, our sense of wonder during the holiday season is linked to positive childhood experiences. It is indeed in the nature of children to experience wonder in this cheerful time. And that experience doesn't end when we graduate from high school. It journeys with us into adulthood. As adults, the holiday stories, imagery, decorations, and especially the lights, easily take us back to that often unexamined childhood mix of holiday wonder, awe, joy, peace and anticipation.

Except this isn't the case for everyone. Holiday-inspired wonder is not universal. Not everyone can reflect back on positive holiday experiences in childhood. Not everyone welcomes the holidays as a time of joy, let alone wonder and awe. We sometimes refer to this as "Blue Christmas." I am grateful to Beth Hudson Hankins and Vivian Carlson, members of our Sunday Services Committee, who will offer a special vespers service on Tuesday, December 13 at 7:30 PM, to address those for whom the holiday season is not a wondrous time. Are you grieving the death of a loved one? Are you estranged from family in some way? Are you someone for whom the holidays just create more stress? Are you someone whose family of origin didn't—or couldn't—muster cheer in the holiday season? If so, our December 13 vespers service may be for you. Please watch our weekly eblast for more information.

Finally, many of you know that I often try to look beyond the stories, imagery, decorations and lights of the holiday season, and to peer into the darkness. Indeed, I try to welcome the December darkness and discern what it has to teach. We light lights in the midst of the darkness, but I sometimes feel we focus too much on the significance of light, and not enough on the equally powerful significance of darkness. For my December 11 sermon, I will be reflecting on how we experience wonder in the darkness. It's a different species of wonder. It's not the wonder associated with the birth of a savior, or the advent of peace on earth

and good will to all. It's not the wonder associated with Santa Claus, Christmas trees, gifts, caroling, hot chocolate and Frosty the Snowman. It's not the wonder of a guiding star. Indeed, the wonder that comes with darkness is mysterious. There are fewer words to name it. In fact, in trying to name it we often miss its essence. It defies naming. It's a response to absence more than to presence. It is an apprehension not of what is, but of what isn't. It is an affirmation of empty space, a silencing of the impulse to fill it up with color and sound. It is the vast backdrop for the light; and to experience it we must be very intentional about how we look. We must be willing to sit outside of the light, sometimes in the chilly late Autumn air. We must be willing to sit with unknowing. We must be patient. There is wonder in the darkness, and it will come if we are patient.

That's just a taste of what I plan to preach about on December 11. For now, I welcome you to the holiday season at UUS:E and in the wider community. In this holiday season I wish for you joy. I wish for you peace. I wish for you opportunities to name pain, sorrow and loss, so that these pieces of you aren't lost in the midst of holiday cheer. Most of all, I wish for you moments of wonder not only in response to the lights, but also in response to the darkness. May wonder feed your soul.

With love,
Rev. Josh



Stop & Shop Cards

A reminder that Stop & Shop cards will be sold after each service on the first Sunday of the month. The cards make great holiday gifts! Cards can be purchased in \$50, \$100 or \$250 amounts. Check it out and if you'd like to help out, contact Sandy Johnson at 860-888-9673.

GHIAA Power Summit

December 7

All Are Encouraged to Attend



The UUS:E GHIAA core team is excited to invite you to our upcoming GHIAA Power Summit!

Who: GHIAA leaders, congregational members, elected officials, incoming congregations, denominational heads, and special guests

What: GHIAA Power Summit 2022

When: Wednesday, December 7, 7:00-9:00 PM

Where: Weaver High School, Hartford

Why: To launch new campaigns, obtain commitments from elected officials, and embody the power of our almost 50 interfaith congregations to make change for justice in our communities, region, and state.

This is a large-scale action, and turnout will be critical. UUS:E has committed to bringing 70 people in person to this event, so WE NEED YOU!! Watch for opportunities to commit to attending this historic event.

To make this action widely accessible, GHIAA has made the following arrangements:

- For COVID safety, KN95 masks will be required throughout the event and will be available at the door for those who need them. We ask that all attendees be vaccinated and boosted, and that you test at home before coming.
- Real-time ASL and Spanish interpretation will be provided.
- Accessible parking and seating are available at Welte Hall.
- Reimbursement is available for the cost of childcare at your home for the evening.

In order to demonstrate GHIAA's power to the elected officials who will be present, and in order to energize ourselves for the work ahead, we envision this as a primarily in-person event. However, for those who truly are not safe in large gatherings due to ongoing health concerns or other circumstances, we will provide a livestream option as well.

Please stay tuned for further information in the coming weeks. We can't wait to see you on Dec. 7!

Two Ways to Help Our School Partners

First a big thank you from our partners at Verplanck Elementary School in Manchester. They really appreciate the many UUS:E households who have generously donated food, school supplies, gift cards and more to students and their families.

This winter there are two ways that you can help: First, the Family Resource Coordinator is in need of gift cards so parents can buy holiday presents. We will be collecting \$25 gift cards for Target and Walmart through December 15. You can mail gift cards or checks to the church office (put Verplanck in the memo line). If it's more convenient, put gift cards in a labeled envelope and drop them at church; on Sundays they can go in the mail holder beside Annie's door.

But wait! There's more! The **RSVP Reads** program is returning (post COVID) to schools throughout our area, and Verplanck is one of their host sites! Volunteers meet weekly with one to three students who are struggling with reading. Sessions are usually 20 – 30 minutes, and the program offers training and materials.

This seems like a great opportunity for UUS:E to join a larger effort at our partner school. Retired Senior & Volunteer Program is part of AmeriCorps and is sponsored in Hartford and Tolland counties by Community Renewal Team.

Please contact Nancy Pappas if you'd like more information. Nanapap338@aol.com or 860-306-3777. We hope to start classroom placements after the New Year

Calling All Pagans!

Reviving the UUS:E Pagan Group

Rev. Josh will host a brainstorming session for all UUS:E Pagans on Tuesday, December 13 at 4:30 in the UUS:E sanctuary. There will also be an opportunity to join the meeting by Zoom. A number of us are interested in establishing a more organized Pagan presence at UUS:E. This meeting is intended to generate ideas for how best to organize. Let's explore possibilities! What books might we read together? What rituals might we conduct, and on what schedule? We need your input. Please let Rev. Josh know if you plan to attend at minister@uuse.org.

Books, Classes, and Discussions

Adult Religious Education

Book Lovers

The Book Lovers continue to meet via Zoom every second Tuesday from 3:30 to 5:00. You are welcome even if you haven't finished the book. The link is sent out each month with the meeting reminder, usually the weekend before that Tuesday by Carolyn Gimbrone. Here are the books, with number of pages, for the next several months.

Goodreads descriptions:

https://www.goodreads.com/review/list/130686405-paul-cocuzzo?ref=nav_mybooks&shelf=uuse-book-lovers

- Dec. 13: **Books for Living**, by Will Schwalbe (257 pages)
- Jan. 10, 2023: **Search**, a novel by Michelle Huneven (400 pages)
- Feb. 14: **Redeeming Justice: From Defendant to Defender, My Fight for Equity on Both Sides of a Broken System**, by Jarret Adams (304 pages)
- Mar. 14: **The Overstory**, a novel by Richard Powers (512 pages)
- Apr. 11: **Remarkable Creatures**, a novel by Tracy Chevalier (320 pages)

Buddhist Group

The Buddhist Group meets via Zoom at 7 PM on the first Tuesday of each month, for meditation and discussion. All are welcome, no meditation experience necessary. Contact Nancy Thompson at nancythompson123@yahoo.com for the Zoom info.

Yoga at the Meetinghouse!

All welcome to these gentle-to-moderate yoga classes in the UUS:E Meetinghouse, Wednesdays at 10:00 AM with Susan Barlow. \$5 drop-in fee. Bring a yoga mat or towel and wear comfortable clothes. All welcome, including beginners! Bring a friend or neighbor; you do not have to be a UUS:E member to come to the classes. Yoga provides an opportunity to quiet the mind as well as strengthen and relax the body. Direct questions to: Susan at SBarlow627@aol.com. Yoga is one of the UUS:E adult education offerings.

"God Talk"

A discussion group for UU theists

This ongoing group explores how UUs can name and experience God in meaningful, useful ways. All are welcome. Contact Rev. Josh at mininster@uuse.org for the Zoom link. We meet on 4th Tuesdays at 4:30 PM.

Humanist Group

This ongoing group explores Religious Humanism and its applications to life, both historically and today. All welcome. Contact Rev. Josh at mininster@uuse.org for the Zoom link. We meet on 3rd Tuesdays at 4:30 PM.

Science and Religion Discussion Group

Next meeting December 1

(Usually Fourth Thursdays at 4:30 PM in the Sanctuary)

Topic: **Creating God**

How does science inform our beliefs? Where do science and religion meet? Where are they in opposition? Members of this ongoing group will select and discuss readings covering myriad topics such as evolutionary biology, artificial intelligence, climate change, the brain, genetics...and the way we look at the Big Questions. Contact Linda Duncan with any questions.

Community Drum Circle

Suspended

Dwindling attendance has caused us to suspend the Community Drum Circle until further notice.

Contact Paul Cocuzzo at pcocuzzo@gmail.com or 978-270-2056 with questions.

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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