

Newsletter

June 2025

Sunday Service at
10:30am, in person and
online

Zoom Sunday Service Link:
[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/891
22019151](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89122019151)

Meeting ID: 891 2201 9151

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Unitarian Universalist Church of Pittsfield



June Sunday Services

June 1 Rev. Rich Hayes: "Impermanence"

June 8 Peggy Taylor: ""The Least of These", followed by Social Justice Award: Danielle Munn

June 15 Circle Sunday: "Drag Story Hour and the Irresistible Revolution"

June 22 Short Service + General Assembly Stream + Annual Picnic

June 29 No Service: Drag Story Hour!

We are always looking for new members for our various committees. Please check out our [website](#) and let us know what resonates with you!

Find us on social media:

[Facebook](#)

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If you'd like to write for the newsletter, please email the Social Media Director at uucpsocialmedia@gmail.com!

Whistling While I Work

I'm very happy to have gained a new monthly writer for the newsletter: Bruna Shabazz, who is one of our newest members. She has jumped in with a vengeance, volunteering not only to write but also to handle the tablet for folks who Zoom in to the service on Sundays. So thank you very much, Bruna, and I look forward to your articles!

I was thinking more about the subject of service and sacrifice, which I brought up in my editorial last month, and I'd like to iterate on it a little more. One thing that surprises me whenever it comes up - because that's just the way my strange little brain works - is the concept that anybody but the person performing the service should be the arbiter about how much they're sacrificing (if they consider themselves to be sacrificing at all).

I have a weird habit...when I'm upset, I clean something (or sometimes, bake/cook something). You could say that cleaning is a sort of therapy for me. This makes my new(ish) position at the UU one that - assuming no crises, which this year has not been a good assumption - very therapeutic for me. Existential dread about the current political climate? Scrubbing toilets will make me feel better. Peeved about something that occurred at work? The window casings need dusting. Was somebody mean? I'll bake a cake...and so on. Even editing this newsletter, though not a physical job, is very calming for me. I just like to be busy. If I'm not doing something at least marginally useful, I fret. This is probably a legacy of growing up with a grandmother who liked to tell me that the Devil (who honestly sounds like a fun guy!) would find work for idle hands.

And as I said last month...for a UU, church is never really "over". While services are important for fellowship and spirituality, I have always felt that the real work of this or any church happens when we're NOT at services. Much of the work I mean has to do with community outreach and social activism, but working to make the church building glow (which it isn't yet, but it's getting there) so that we can invite the community in to celebrate with us is also important work, and so it makes *me* glow inside to be able to do it. I'm just weird, okay?

I called this article "whistling while I work" but I have a confession to make: I can't actually whistle to any degree. So sometimes, if there's nobody around, I will sing instead. Or recite poetry. Or talk to my personal idea of god. Or make plans for what comes next. I've made some really amazing plans.

*Peace and Joy,
Alexander Herrmann, Editor*

“There are two seasons when the leaves are in their glory, their green and perfect youth in June and their ripe old age.” — Henry David Thoreau

“Spring being a tough act to follow, God created June.” — Al Bernstein

Adulting in a New Age

When I saw Alexander's email asking if anyone was interested in writing for the newsletter, I was immediately excited about the opportunity and wanted to take it on. Just like I volunteered to run the Zoom meeting for Sunday services, I did it at least partially out of a sense of obligation to serve. To be in community with others is a goal that is important to me as I navigate making the Berkshires my home, which seems like a continual process given that my hometown is on the other side of the state. My vision of community involves active participation from everyone in the ways that each person is best able to contribute. And, while I know that boundaries and limits are needed to temper these contributions to avoid continuing to pour from an empty cup, I all too frequently find myself in that position before I can even recognize the signs. I have a feeling that this experience might be shared by many others in our church community, and from what I have noticed, I do not think it is a coincidence that I (and many of you) are neurodivergent. I know that every person has value to share with others, and this time, I will be offering my perspective on autistic burnout.

I have a constant need to keep my plate full with responsibilities, especially those surrounding academic or career goals, with household, social, and personal responsibilities getting sacrificed as an afterthought. As my school year just came to an end and I confronted the reality of full time employment for the next 3.5 months, the burnout I was so fearful of and desperately trying to avoid since last summer reared its head. I figured someone else might want to commiserate or consider some actionable steps.

Here are some things I have been doing, or at least planning to do, to help counteract burnout:

- To feed my strong sense of social justice, I have followed up paying the government some debt I owed with donating some money to mutual aid funds for causes important to me.
- Calling out of work and using my banked sick time without feeling guilty (mostly)
- Asking for extensions on assignments
- Using my collection of saved/reused plastic takeout tupperware/utensils as dishes that I have the option to throw out instead of wash
- Swinging in my hammock if it's warm out, or soaking in a bathtub if it's cold out
- Using tools like blue light blocking glasses, earplugs, fidget toys

“Live in the sunshine.
Swim in the sea. Drink
in the wild air.” —
Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Green was the
silence, wet was the
light, the month of
June trembled like a
butterfly.” — Pablo
Neruda

- Walking my dog, or walking without my dog, or anything with my dog
- Reduce overstimulation at home with less TV watching and more time scheduled to lay under a blanket
- Be inspired by my sister's recent graduation, reminding me that my humanity is my strength, and that resisting reliance on AI is an act of rebellion.

Is this writing perfect? No. But it exists because I wrote it anyways, without expectation for its quality or if it will be accepted for the newsletter. I hope reading it helps you in some way, whether it provides you with solidarity, a laugh, a cry, inspiration, or a reminder of your humanity and ability to think and act and be.

Bruna L. Shabazz

Weekly Happenings at the UU

Sundays	10:30am	Sunday Services
	7pm	1st and 3rd Sunday: Men’s Group
Mondays	7-9pm	Berkshire Lyric Rehearsal
Tuesdays	5:30pm	Crafting Group (bring your own materials, any craft)
	6pm	1st Tuesday: Berkshire Coalition for Suicide Prevention; Healing After Suicide Support Group
	7pm	2nd Tuesday: WordxWord: Poets Creating Conversation
Wednesdays	5pm	Vickie Bandoski Yoga
Thursdays	10am	Vickie Bandoski Yoga
	5:30pm	Pittsfield Sangha Meditation Group
Saturdays	10am	Berkshire Lyric Childrens Chorus Rehearsal
	1pm	Teen Youth Group (Crafting / Games / Social Justice)

"The roses make the
world so sweet,

The bees, the birds
have such a tune,

There's such a light and
such a heat

And such a joy this
June..." — George
MacDonald

"The birds sing low, the
birds sing high,

The lights of June are
in the sky..." — Sara L.
Vickers Oberholtzer

The Grumpy Groundskeeper

Back yard being mostly under control aside from the ferns which seem to expand to fit the space allowed, I turned my gaze to the other areas of the grounds. A strip on the side near the fence-line caught my attention, and so I set to work, rakes and hooks akimbo as I put paid to entire civilizations of garlic mustard (which, with the addition of oil, pine nuts, and some nice funky Parmesan, makes an entirely serviceable pesto), and untold seasons' worth of leaf litter (which, with the same additions, does not).

At one point, my rake swished through vacant air where I expected the ground to be. Oh no, I thought to myself, another groundhog hole. I still haven't gotten round to dealing with the first!

Excuse me, a small voice said. I'm not a hole, I'm a torus.

Grand. I finally escape Mother Nature's reclamer aspect, and stumble face to face with her geometry nerd aspect. "That would only be correct if you had another opening, which you don't. That makes you, topologically speaking, a dent, and colloquially speaking, a hole." *Well, the small voice said, I actually have an uncountable number of openings, if you count the tiny gaps between particles of dirt.*

I pinched the bridge of my nose. This is why the hard science types are generally confined to research institutions and other enclaves, because something about the distillation of human understanding of the world to base concepts is fundamentally incompatible with the day-to-day world. "By that same logic, spheres are the only things that exist, as even atoms in a molecule have tiny gaps between them. If we treat those gaps as spaces, then neither a torus nor a dent can exist."

I'm still a torus, said the small voice. Specifically, a three-dimensional torus rotated through the xz-plane to form a construction visually similar to, but distinct from, an inverted 1-handle on the surface of a spheroid.

"Aha," I declared triumphantly. "If you insist that the spaces between specks of dirt count as openings in manifold space, then you wouldn't just be ONE torus, you'd be an infinite number of them! Put THAT in your pipe and smoke it!"

Would the pipe also be a torus? asked the small voice. *I'm very good at toruses.*

"That's not the point," I continued. "If you insist on being a torus, which you're not, then you're not 'a' anything, you're an infinite

“The yellow-grey crumbling walls were green in places with wrinkled harts-tongues, and were topped with sweet-williams and spreading house-leek and stone-crop and wild-flowers whose delicious sweetness made for the drowsy repose of perfect summer.” — Bram Stoker

“There is no price set on the lavish summer, And June may be had by the poorest comer.” — James Russell Lowell

number of whatever you are, and everything else is too. You're a hole, see? Only one opening." To prove my point, I slid the handle of my rake into the opening and gave it a good shove. The 'thump' of handle hitting soil manifested, instead, as a bush a few feet away shaking. I closed my eyes in defeat. There was, after all, another opening. When will I learn not to get into arguments with disembodied voices? Not today, apparently.

I told you, the small voice said. I'm very, very good at toruses.

I filled in the hole. Tunnel. Torus. Whatever.
Christopher Hicks, Groundskeeper

Annual Social Justice Award: Danielle Munn

It's our absolute pleasure to be presenting this year's Social Justice award to Danielle Munn, the owner of Witch Slapped on North Street in Pittsfield.

The moment one walks into Danielle's store, they are warmly greeted by folks happy to see them, no matter what their circumstances. Among other things, Danielle's store is a haven for unhoused people who don't have anywhere else to go sometimes for a clean toilet or a warm meal, and it is for this ministry that we are awarding her. So many businesses want the unhoused to be out of sight, but Danielle instead feeds them, clothes them, and serves them. She gives of herself to a degree that takes one's breath away, but that is her mission and her passion. Witch Slapped is not just a store: it's a community of love.

Please join us on June 8 for the presentation, and then stay for the Social Hour and reception afterwards to meet Danielle and thank her for her service!

June Open House and Community Dinner

We hope to see you at our next Open House! It will be on June 17 from 5:30-8, with dinner around 6pm. This is a slight change from before, as most people seemed to prefer dinner at 6. Our Youth Group will also be there with craft tables. Hope to see you there!

News from Berkshire Interfaith Organizing (BIO)

Come **Jam for Justice** with BIO on June 22, from 4-8 PM at The Guthrie Center, at 2 Van Deusenville Road, in Great Barrington. This is our 2nd Jam for Justice Concert. Some of the wonderful performers from last year's event will be returning: Clara Guatta, Media Noche, Christine Bile and BIO's own Bob Shepherd. In

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addition, Jack Waldheim, a well-known local performer and Jack Haskell of Portland, ME will round out the line up! Los Lopez Taco Truck will be there selling Mexican favorites. While attendance is free, we are asking for a suggested donation of \$25. Come listen to some very talented performers as you show your support for BIO. To help us ensure enough seating, please RSVP at: tinyurl.com/bioj4j25. See you there!

Social Hour Needs You!

We are all so appreciative of Ben running the social hour following services. Sign up to help using the sheet in the Social Hall on the table - it makes such a difference!



Image by brgfx