

Newsletter

May 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



May Sunday Services

May 4 Rev. Rich Hayes: “The Power of Yes”

May 11 Alexander Herrmann: “Oh Mother...”

May 18 Circle Sunday: “Utopian Imaginings”

May 25 (tentative) Quilt Series: Paganism

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](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Website](#)

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

Eternally Yours

A couple of members were hanging out after one of our services, and as I passed by to take my dog out for a walk, one of them laughingly said to me, "Oh, is church OVER?" The service had ended more than an hour before. I laughed in response - we're never in a hurry to toss anyone out - but here's the actual answer to that question:

Church is never over. Not because we're expected to spend all day, every day, in this building or with these people, of course, but because when the service ends, our role in the community doesn't. Or to put it this way: when the service at church ends, our service begins.

As UUs, we feel charged to "serve" pretty much 24/7. There is of course nobody hanging over us to make sure we do; we're in charge of ourselves. But we are all about service, to each other and to the community.

Service can take so many forms, but often - though not always - it implies a sacrifice of some sort. I'm not talking about total self-denial, which just isn't sustainable, but rather a sacrifice of something manageable. For instance, one might choose to sacrifice some of their time to do something for others on a regular basis. Another person might have a personal problem that makes performing a particular service difficult, but chooses to do it anyway because that's what's needed at the time, and that is their sacrifice. Yet another might contribute money, on a regular or semi-regular basis, sacrificing some discretionary funds, to provide materials for a project. It needn't be painful.

I think though that sometimes, we try to be accepting of service while denying sacrifice, not so much from ourselves, but from others. In other words, we may tell others that they should not provide service to the extent of any measurable self-sacrifice. It might seem like the right thing to do, but some people really want to be of service, really want to provide that sacrifice, and if we prevent that, we may be preventing something that a person really needs to do for some reason. So if someone says "I really want to do this," then we should let them do it, with our thanks.

We often frame UU as something that's "easy" in the sense that we don't insist on things that a lot of other religions do, not even belief in a particular god. But actually, the lack of religious structure makes UU harder to "do". We don't have rules per se; we expect everyone to be an adult and do their share, so that nobody's sacrifice leads to burnout. If you know me and my occasional childishness - I hope it's only occasional - then you might wonder if in fact being an adult is my sacrifice...and in a way you'd be right. As a person with autism, certain things are really hard for me to accomplish, including being a leader of any sort. But that has been one of my sacrifices for the past two years, to try to be the leader this church has needed, and I think that I've succeeded at least some of the time.

This will be my last editorial as President of this church, because my service is now taking a different form. However, it won't be the last you hear from me, since I'm also the editor of this newsletter. I have more to say about service, and grace, and what "good" means, and all sorts of exciting topics. I hope you'll enjoy them, but as always, feel free to let me know what you think, and to submit articles and news yourselves. The more the merrier!

*Peace and Joy,
Alexander Herrmann*

“You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream.” – C.S. Lewis

“What you get by achieving your goals is not as important as what you become by achieving your goals.”
– Zig Ziglar

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 Grumpy Groundskeeper

Backyard was getting a skosh overgrown, so one fine morning I descended on it with my new toy: a brush hog. If you've never had the pleasure, a brush hog is a bit like a string trimmer - those tame little devices that thump grass and light weeds down by whipping it with a plastic cord - with one minor difference, specifically, that the string bit is swapped out with a three-winged steel saw blade that looks like something from a Dracula movie.

A few minutes afterward, having made some inroads into the morass of blackberry cane and buckthorn, the scent of geosmin and green leaf volatiles swirling around the scene like the stench of blood on some old battlefield, I took a look around to survey my progress. A forsythia bush, thankful for having its viney fetters pulled away, had already started to stretch out into the newly open space. Yes, I thought to myself, this is going swimmingly. I continue my work.

“There is some good in this world, and it’s worth fighting for.” — J.R.R. Tolkien

“Never bend your head. Always hold it high. Look the world straight in the eye.” — Helen Keller

A green voice echoes in the back of my mind. *You there*, it said. *You know this is all cyclical, right? You push me back for now, I wait until you're gone, I erase your progress, then whoever comes after you pushes me back again. You know there can be no ultimate victory. I'll always win in the end.*

Bloody metaphysical representations of abstract concepts. Always talking your ear off when you're trying to get some work done. I says to it, "Buddy," I says, "I'm just trying to plant a garden. Besides, Camus settled the conflict between the human desire for legacy and the indifference of an impersonal universe decades ago." A burgeoning alder falls to my blade. "One must imagine Sisyphus happy." I find that if you dismiss the spirits outright, they get testy, but you're usually safe if you bring receipts. "Getting depressed about it is so Kafkaesque - if you abandon your hope for an impossible outcome, you're only left with desolation if you insist on maintaining control. Surrender even the idea of control, and that desolation instead becomes the infinite tapestry of the ten thousand victories you never considered."

The green voice was quiet a moment - they haven't read nearly as much theory as they pretend they have, much like a good half of philosophy wonks - and then chuckled. Uh oh.

Fair enough, it whispered. *Enjoy your boulder, then.*

I turned just in time to see the branches of the forsythia relax a bit more, closing off my path out. Typical nature spirits, they jump straight to imprisonment when you get one over on them. I checked the brush hog to see I still had most of a charge left on the battery. "Joke's on you, greenie!" I holler defiantly. "Happiness is only possible when the essential meaninglessness of one's existence is not only acknowledged, but positively affirmed! Put THAT in your pipe and smoke it!" Silent in the face of philosophical defeat, the vines simply closed in tighter. Tune in next month to see if I survived.

Christopher Hicks, Groundskeeper

May Cleanup Day

Our Groundskeeper has declared that Saturday, May 17 will be our Spring Cleanup Day! We hope to see you there and, if you are a member, also at our **Annual Meeting on May 18** after the service!

May Open House and Community Dinner

We hope to see you at our next Open House! It will be on May 20 from 5-8, with dinner around 5:30. There will be cake!

We thank you for your support! Please use this QR code to donate to our church or mail a check to: Unitarian Universalist Church of Pittsfield, 175 Wendell Ave., Pittsfield MA 01201



News from Berkshire Interfaith Organizing (BIO)

You probably read in the *Eagle* about the city's proposed traffic median ordinance - which would have impacted not only panhandlers, a marginalized group, but also anybody engaging in political protest - was recently shut down by activists. BIO, along with other groups, worked with other activists and panhandlers to defeat the proposed ordinance, which is being filed with a recommendation to shelve. BIO is headquartered in our church and works closely with our leadership, so we are very happy that this lopsided and prejudicial ordinance will not be passed, although we also know that there's more work to be done and that another such ordinance may be proposed in the future.

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, and passed around in Sunday Service during Joys and Concerns - it makes such a difference!



Image by brgfx