



THE FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY OF MIDDLEBOROUGH

25 South Main Street, Middleborough, MA 02346 www.uumiddleboro.org 508-947-1935 December 2024

*We offer in-person and online Sunday worship services at 10:30 a.m.
The link to each service will be posted on our website every week.*

Sunday, December 1

Nicola Wilbar presenting

Sunsets and Stillpoints: Surrender as Our Spiritual Destiny

We will be weaving together themes of dark and light; death and rebirth; spiritual experience and intellectual understanding. Join us for this contemplative service where we explore finding places of surrender to relax into difficult moments. The Chalice Choir will be singing *Return Again - Hashiveinu*. Special music will be shared by Nicola Wilbar and Ed Priest.

Nicola Wilbar has a Master's Degree in Social Work and post-graduate training in Psychosynthesis which is, among other things, a spiritual therapeutic modality. She worked for several years as a therapist before becoming disabled in 2004. She is a proud member of our congregation. She enjoys sharing her spirituality with others and feels especially privileged to make sacred music with those who share her values.

Sunday, December 8

Rev. Beau River preaching

Gifts That Matter Most

With the approach of the winter holidays, we begin to contemplate how we might honor and celebrate the ones we hold dear. Media outlets inundate us with wonderful gift ideas to tempt our wallets with the promise of happiness. The seduction of consumerism is so great, it often leads to the depletion of our financial resources. This service will explore the essence of gift giving and the possible meaning of true happiness. The Chalice Choir will be singing *Love Calls Us On* by Jason Shelton.

Thursday, December 12, at 7:00 p.m.

Finding Peace at the Holidays – Evening Candlelight Service

We welcome you to join us in the sanctuary for a quiet, contemplative candlelit evening service designed to help us all cope with stress at the holidays. The service will be presented by Bet Giddings, Natalie Johnson, Patty and Barry Simon, Valerie Fontaine, Jeff Giddings, Frank Girard, and Tony Soares. The theme is Peace. The program will consist of meditations; readings and poetry; and instrumental music on flute, hammered dulcimer, and piano. We will create a darkened, hushed sanctuary with a background of quiet hammered dulcimer music. Like entering a monastic environment, a sacred space. We will invite everyone to let go of thoughts and concerns of the day and to quietly center themselves for this time, to be bathed in a quiet flow of music and poetic voices. Readings and meditations will focus on finding hope and strength and joy in the midst of the darkness of winter and the turbulence of our daily lives. We will end with an instrumental version of the round "Dona Nobis Pacem (Grant Us Peace)."

This event is free and open to the public. Please invite your friends and join us for a calming and inspiring evening of peace and beauty.

Sunday, December 15

Rev. Beau Rivers preaching

The Spirit of Generosity

What are the spiritual dimensions of generosity? What role does generosity play in the quality of our lives?

Sunday, December 22, at 5:00 p.m.

(There is no morning worship service today.)

Winter Solstice Service

We invite you to join us tonight in celebration of the Winter Solstice as we gather to bid farewell to the Dark and to welcome the return of the Sun. From prehistoric times to the present day, humans worldwide have held vigil throughout the darkest night in community, reverently anticipating the first rays of sunlight. As it crests the horizon, the light moves swiftly across the cold landscape, bringing with it regenerative warmth and the promise of a bright new day. Sourced from ancient Solstice traditions, our service will culminate in a ritual offering of the Light within each of us to the greater Light whose return rings forth a renewed sense of hope and the possibility of a more peaceful future for all beings.

Tuesday, December 24, at 5:30 p.m.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Come celebrate Christmas Eve with family and friends at UU Middleboro! Music and carols will fill the Sanctuary: Celtic harp, Organ, Flutes, Chalice Choir, Piano, Ensembles, and Solos.

Sunday, December 29

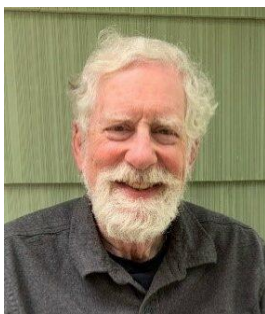
Adrienne Williams presenting

HABARI GANI! Celebrating Kwanzaa Amidst the Virulent Practice of Book Banning and Deliberate Distortion of History

The service includes personal reflections on Kwanzaa's educational and social impact on a people and a nation. There is true cause for celebrating its beginnings and expanding its reach. As always, there will be shared words and communal singing!

Adrienne Williams is a retired educator, human services professional, national consultant, longtime member of this congregation and founding board member of the Unitarian Universalist Massachusetts Action Network. She continues to use the arts (music, poetry, storytelling) to teach, learn and connect.

From the Parish Committee



Jeff Giddings, President

Coming Together to Preserve Our Church Building

Recent events remind us how important it is to protect what we value. In that spirit, we are preparing to launch a major project to renew the exterior shell of our church building before the aging roof and shingles lead to potentially expensive damage. The Building & Grounds Committee has done a thorough examination of the building, identified the necessary repairs, and outlined a 3-phase plan to complete the work efficiently. When the project is completed in 2027, the building will be safe and dry for many years to come.

The plans are not final, but the overall cost of this work is estimated in the range of \$150,000 to \$200,000. This is a challenge and an opportunity for members and friends of our church family to come together to protect and preserve our beautiful, sacred, and yes, quirky building for future generations. The Finance Committee has appointed a Fund Drive Team, headed by Norm Grenier and Rick Benard, to raise the money needed for the project. The Fund Drive will get underway in December and continue until February. Donations can be spread out over 3 to 5 years.

It's important to understand that this essential renewal project will depend on contributions above the pledges that pay for our regular operating expenses. This special project Fund Drive is separate from our annual pledge drive, which will take place in March-April and will cover operating expenses for the coming fiscal year (July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026).

The success of our mission, beginning with “to create and sustain a welcoming and caring community that embodies our shared UU values,” has always depended on the deep generosity of our members and friends. Numerous times in our history we have faced similar challenges, and we have always risen to the occasion. This is another such opportunity. The conflict, confusion, and suffering we see in the world today make clear the importance of coming together to keep our flame alive.

Minister's Message



Rev. Beau Rivers

Finding Joy

To help support one another through this moment in history, I draw on the wisdom of Valarie Kaur, social activist and founder of *The Revolutionary Love Project*. *The project inspires and equips people to build beloved community where they are, centered around an ethic of love.*

Finding Joy this holiday season may be difficult for some than others. People with marginalized identities are living in fear of future legislation that already threatens their freedom and safety. When we do not resonate with the life experience of others, a *Revolutionary Love* calls upon us to Wonder. To Wonder is to cultivate a sense of awe and openness to the experiences of others, to listen to their pain, their needs, and desires. Wonder brings us the humility we need to recognize other people are as complex and infinite as we are. Wonder gives us information on how to love and care for each other. It is the wellspring of love.

When we resonate with a sense of dread about the future, Kaur's *Revolutionary Love* invites us to find Joy. To find Joy means to find what gives us hope, reminds us of possibility, and gives our life purpose. Joy goes beyond simple happiness. Joy carries us through the darkness and uncertainty and makes us want to keep going. What brings us Joy and light does not need to be complicated or profound. It can be as simple as admiring the delicate beauty of a bird at a feeder, delighting in the laughter of a child, wearing a favorite sweater, or breathing in the fresh outdoor air. Kaur tells us,

To let in Joy is to give our senses over to what is beautiful, delightful, pleasurable, or wondrous in the present moment. Joy is the gift of love. It returns us to everything good and beautiful and worth fighting for.

If the aim of oppression is to deprive us of Joy, then finding Joy in the midst of fear and uncertainty is an act of resistance.

May the Gifts of Wonder and Joy Be Yours This Holiday Season!

Much Love,
Rev. Beau

Minister's Message (continued)



Finding the Light in Little Things

by Garima Sharma

In a world that can feel tough and grey,
Finding joy may seem far away.
But fear not, for a secret lies,
In small moments, a precious prize.

Believe in the magic that's all around,
In the simple gestures that may astound.
For life's goodness, it may yet reveal,
When you pay attention and mindfully feel.

Embrace the beauty of tiny pleasures,
The sun's gentle warmth and nature's treasures.
From laughter shared to a tender touch,
These moments remind us life means so much.

Shift perspectives and, with hope, decree,
The world isn't as terrible as it seems to be.
Choose gratitude, find reasons to adore,
And watch darkness fade, replace by more.

So, cherish the small moments each day,
And let the world's troubles softly sway.
Embrace the goodness that life can bring
In little things, find joy's sweet symphony.



The great variety of winter seasonal music is impressive, from classical to folk to pop to everything in between. Despite the hokey barrage of tunes in many retail stores, most of the time we can pick and choose what fits our mood. The greatest joy is making music to share with one another.

We have two caroling adventures for members of the Chalice Choir and Alumni, which also includes Family Choir. On Thursday, December 5, we are singing at the Council on Aging with and for the Adult Daycare Program for something called “Trim-a-Tree.” In addition to lots of carols and songs, participants decorate a HUGE Christmas Tree and (of course) enjoy some snacks. Three days later, on Sunday, December 8, we will sing an hour-long program for and with residents at Oakhill Healthcare (nursing home.) If you want to be a part of these adventures, please contact me. Sign-ups are required.

Our UU Song Circle is open to all on the second Friday evening of each month. Participants gather at 6:00 in the Parish Hall to share snacks, followed by singing from 6:30 to 8:00. You can choose your favorites and lead the circle, or simply take a pass on leadership and enjoy singing in the circle.

This month, we have THREE holiday-themed worship services. The first is “Finding Peace at the Holidays” on Thursday, December 12, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m. The second is a Winter Solstice Service on Sunday, December 22, at 5:00. This evening service replaces the Sunday morning service on December 22. The third is our beloved Christmas Eve Service on Tuesday, December 24, at 5:30.

Musically speaking, it’s a time of blessing one another with hope to overcome darkness. Wishing you all a wonderful holiday season, full of love, warmth, and candlelight.

Susan Hotchkiss, Director of Music





We are a growing, caring, loving community of children and adults who are learning about the interdependent web of life this year. The garden space is growing, and we are grateful to be able to use the land behind the church to continue our exploration of nature. We will have nature walks every month and explore our local environment, the habitats around us and the animals and plants that are near us. What is our role in sustainability? How do we fit in the world? We will work on answering the questions together this year. Registration is rolling throughout the year and is available here: [Religious Exploration Registration Form \(google.com\)](#)

Earth Advocates!

We are learning about animal habitats and transformations in nature this month. The kids have loved exploring the new outdoor space and are planting items for the spring. We are going to make some very exciting gardens and hopefully create some nice habitats together.

Youth Group

Youth Group is for children 6th grade and up. We meet on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m. when we have enough children to make a group. We have been going on outings and helping around church. We are very excited to try working with the Taunton UU church to build some more opportunities to be together in different ways.

Babysitting Available!

Nursery Care continues to be available for babies and toddlers under five years of age each Sunday from 10:15 to 11:45 a.m. Child care is also offered during other church activities.

Family Services

The children will be upstairs for family services once a month. Our next one is on December 22, 2024, and we will be having the service in the evening to celebrate the winter solstice.

RE Committee

The RE Committee meets on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 6:00 pm. In December it will be on December 11. We meet at church in the Parish Hall. Christine Hoyle is the committee chair. We are always looking for new volunteers.

Roller Skating at Forest Family Fun Center

On December 1 we will be joining the Taunton church from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. We will meet at the Center. I make sure there are enough adults to supervise the children if any parents want to drop of their children and take time out for holiday shopping or cheer.

Holiday Party

We will be celebrating the winter holidays together on Sunday, December 8 from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m. Friends are welcome to join us that day; anyone can join! Please see the flyer on the next page.

Kelly Lownds, Director of Religious Exploration



**PLEASE SIGN UP TO BE A GREETER OR
A COFFEE HOUR HOST ON A SUNDAY MORNING
IN DECEMBER!**

You may use the sign-up sheets on the Parlor table or click [HERE](#) or email andreapriesto@gmail.com or office@uumiddleboro.org to volunteer to be a Coffee Hour Host. You may contact Dorine Levasseur dmlevasseur925@gmail.com to be a Greeter or email office@uumiddleboro.org. Instructions will be emailed to you. Thank you for participating in this ministry.

Other Ways to Help with Coffee Hour

If you are not able to host Coffee Hour on a Sunday morning, there are other ways you can help.

1. Buy boxed, non-perishable milk. Put on the shelf in the church kitchen (the shelf with the sliding windows to the Parish Hall). Buy 1/2 and 1/2, quart size, and put in the fridge.
2. Purchase packaged baked goods. Put in the bin on wire shelf labeled "coffee hour snacks." Cookies, crackers, non-perishable goods.
3. Buy or bake perishable baked goods and bring on Sunday or put in the freezer. Please label them with the date and message "for coffee hour."



Team News:

The Social Justice Team is delighted to welcome our newest member, Katy Archibald: "I'm a US Air Force veteran who had been meaning to start coming to church after moving to Middleboro. Seeing the Saturday standouts finally inspired me to join. Being part of the Social Justice Committee allows me to actively contribute to meaningful causes and connect with others who share a vision for a more equitable and compassionate world." At our November 7 meeting, we were also delighted to be joined by our longtime member, Jane.

Peace, Justice and Equality Vigil:

The Saturday morning 11:30 -12:00 Vigil for Peace, Justice and Equality has been continuing. We were joined on November 16 by three Bridgewater residents, members of Bridgewater Communities for Civil Rights. Thanks, BCCR! A few weeks ago we caught the attention of former church members Jerry and Judy Gordon who were walking by. We had a lovely conversation with them and are now very happy to see them in the pews on Sunday morning.

National News:

We have received a sad report from the Trevor Project, which supports LGBTQ+ youth in so many ways and which the church has supported with Cash in the Plate: The organization's Crisis Services conversations have surged since the November 5 election, with a 700% increase on November 6.

FCC and FBI investigations continue into a nationwide rash of text messages to Black and Brown people, including students. The texts were first reported on November 9 by the *New York Times* and *Boston Globe*. They instructed recipients to report "at the nearest plantation to pick cotton," and similar messages, some very specific as to when, where, and in what vehicle to look for the "executive slave." The messages address the recipient by name and, in many cases, threaten violence. Abington and Stoughton are among Massachusetts towns where high school students have received these texts.

CNN interviewed some of the recipients and their relatives. One recipient said, "Who is doing this and how are they able to keep coming back? You don't feel safe in anything that you do, because you don't know who's doing it. You don't know how far they'll take it."

Cash in the Plate:

The first week of December will be donated to the Boston Immigration Justice Accompaniment Network (BIJAN), with whom the Boston-based UU Justice Action team has been working. BIJAN "is a community network of faith communities, individuals and other activist groups working to reduce the escalating harm of our immigration system in the current political context. BIJAN provides accompaniment, which may include support in court or at ICE check-ins, legal referrals, fundraising for bond or legal fees, letters of support from the community, rides for families to visit loved ones in detention, and assistance with paperwork or bond payments. BIJAN can also help with housing, transportation, and other immediate needs of people released on bond who have no other resources in the community. BIJAN works closely with immigration justice and abolitionist organizations to support those impacted by the immigration system. BIJAN takes action only in response to requests from those in need of support."

The Cash in the Plate for the remaining four weeks of December will be donated to the Minister's Discretionary Fund.

NEW MOON MEDITATION ON ZOOM

with Natalie Johnson

Sunday, December 1 6:00 - 6:45 p.m.

<https://zoom.us/j/91347227142>

This month's first New Moon falls in the sign of Sagittarius, the great cosmic archer and the more exalted octave of Gemini. It is he who encourages us to elevate our thoughts and ideas before releasing them into the higher realms for seeding. It is he who exhorts us to aim higher, dream bigger, shoot for the stars...but with discernment and precision. It is he who asks us to consider not only our own needs and those of our immediate family and friends, but to widen our circle of kinship to include all of life...human, more than human, planetary, cosmic and beyond.



We are still deep within the embrace of the holy dark, enjoying slow time and discerning which prayers are best to send ahead into the coming year. Let us invite Sagittarius to assist us in honing our arrows so that when the Light returns at Solstice, they will be poised and pointed upward, ready to fly aloft carrying the seeds of a brighter future for all beings.

Please join us this night as we share ways we each might bring greater light into our world.

All are welcome.



JOIN US FOR A

Holiday Wreath-Making Workshop

SATURDAY DECEMBER 7 10:00 AM



UU MIDDLEBORO, 25 SOUTH MAIN STREET

ACCESSIBLE BUILDING

\$30 COVERS ALL MATERIALS

(BRING HAND CLIPPERS, WIRE CUTTERS, & WREATH BASE IF YOU HAVE THEM.)

REGISTER: OFFICE@UUMIDDLEBORO.ORG

508-947-1935



Save the Date!
Bring a Dish to Share
Sunday, December 15, 2024
12:00 – 1:30 p.m.
Parish Hall

Building Preservation Fund – Potluck Lunch
Presentations by the Parish Committee, Buildings and Grounds Committee,
and Church Finance Team

FULL MOON MEDITATION ON ZOOM

with Natalie Johnson

Sunday, December 15 6:00 - 6:45 p.m.

<https://zoom.us/j/95107432576>



This month's Full Moon falls in the sign of Gemini. Hopefully we have taken a cue from the natural world these past few weeks and have made good use of our time in the rich, fertile dark to prepare for the great influx of Light that will pour down at Solstice as the Sun is reborn.

Tonight, as we gather under the brilliant silvery light of the Cold Moon, let us take advantage of the energies to release, let go of and surrender any last vestiges of the old paradigm of limitation in order to walk into the new year with eyes, arms and hearts wide open. May the coming year be the beginning of a new way of living on planet Earth, one of equity, magnanimity, and peace. May we finally understand that there is no separation between us, that indeed, we are all One. May we understand that although we will still face difficulties ahead, we can join hands and work together to solve anything that stands in our way. May this be the year that we finally remember who we truly are and choose love.

Come join us this night for a journey of remembrance and a glimpse of the future that awaits us if we only have the courage to embrace it with joy.

All are welcome.



BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP ON ZOOM

Monday, December 16 3:30 – 4:30 p.m.

The UU Book Club continues to meet on the third Monday of the month. Book Club members will be emailed the Zoom link a few days before each meeting.

The Book for December is *What Once Was Promised* by Louis Trubiano.

If you are not on the Book Club's email list, but would like to join us for the discussion, please contact Lois Aldrich (lois.aldrich63@gmail.com). New and old members are welcome.



CUUPS WINTER SOLSTICE RITUAL

Monday, December 16 7:00 p.m.

Parish Hall



The Wheel has come full circle arriving at Winter Solstice. We have spent our time since Samhain held in the dark, lovingly incubating new ideas and possibilities to offer to the light as the sun is reborn.

Tonight we will gather to honor the gifts of the dark and to celebrate the rebirth of the Sun as he rises higher and stronger in the sky each day. Although Winter will last until Ostara, the promise of new life and new growth has been achieved, and we can be assured of the renewal of hope and of bright new beginnings.

Tonight we will join in circle to share with one another the ways we each will use our unique gifts to add to the growing light.

Our ritual will be followed by a simple potluck feast.

All are welcome.



PARISH COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, December 18 6:30 p.m.

Parish Hall



All members and friends are invited to attend the Parish Committee meeting.



NEW MOON MEDITATION ON ZOOM

with Natalie Johnson

Sunday, December 29 6:00 - 6:45 p.m.

<https://zoom.us/j/91347227142>



The second New Moon of December falls in the sign of Capricorn and is known as a Black Moon. Some consider this a particularly auspicious time to set intentions and believe that things set in motion under a Black Moon will be looked upon with special favor. In any case, standing as we are on the threshold of a new year, an additional thrust of energy seems welcome.

We have sent our arrows of aspiration high into the heavens under the Sagittarius New Moon. We have shed all we needed to let go of under the Gemini Full Moon, and now we stand poised to enter the New Year unburdened by the old, radiant with newly infused light and ready to begin the difficult but joyous work of building a new world. Let us gather tonight under the Black Moon and renew our vows to each other, to Mother Earth and to the thriving of all life.

Come join us. All are welcome.

THE FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY OF MIDDLEBOROUGH

OUR MISSION:

To create and sustain a welcoming and caring community that embodies our UU principles, inspires spiritual growth without dogma or creed, and promotes and serves racial and social justice.



Parish Care

Parish Care help is available to assist with meals, transportation, emergency babysitting, and hospital visits during illnesses or other family emergencies.

We are a diverse, active and caring community; and we welcome your questions and your participation. You are always invited to call or visit our minister to discuss any matter of concern to you.

Lay Ministry Coordinator: Susan Curtiss
Lay Pastoral Minister: Sue St. Germain
Lay Pastoral Minister: Sandy Smiley
Lay Pastoral Minister: Cate Vanzant
Minister: Rev. Beau Rivers

Parish Committee

President:	Jeff Giddings
Vice President:	Viola Fairweather
Treasurer:	Stephen Larrett
Assistant Treasurer:	Nancy Backus
Parish Clerk:	Lois Aldrich
Members At Large:	Jim Bonnar Diane Reed



CHURCH CALENDAR

