



March 2025 UU Bennington e-Newsletter

Our monthly newsletter is made possible by submissions from our UUFB community and beyond.

Deadline for submission of content for the April 2025 edition is noon on Saturday, March 29 . Please send all submissions to uubenningtonnews@gmail.com.

If I don't hear from you, you may hear from me!

Sue Andrews

Our Mission

The mission of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Bennington is to create and nurture a spiritual, ethical and welcoming community which celebrates personal growth, diversity of beliefs, and freedom of expression.

From Our President

I'm pleased to announce that Julian Hadley has accepted the open position on the Board as the at-large member for Operations. Please welcome him and offer your assistance if you can, especially for maintenance matters.

The Warming Place has been working well. Rich Jorgensen contributed a colorful sign to help people know where we are. We still have more to learn, so when the Interfaith Council suggested going to a webinar call "When ICE Comes to Church", I attended. Some of the helpful information I learned included: do not ask anyone for their immigration status; if ICE agents were to come and insist on entering, we do not have to let them in unless they have a warrant from a judge (sometimes they make their own warrants which have no legal power): and that if agents were to arrive, they should be referred to whoever is in charge, so not everyone has to deal with them.

On a cheerier note, the UUA is offering a series of evening webinars in March to help small congregations like ours. The topics are community building activities, deep listening, and social action, plus an opportunity to talk with volunteers in other congregations. Use this link: <https://uua.wufoo.com/forms/q1ejvozi0vyp2lx/> and keep clicking through a couple of pages to get all the information. There is a small fee on a sliding scale and you can submit that to the treasurers for reimbursement. Let me know if you sign up so those of us who attend can talk afterwards and decide how we'll make use of this.

It looks like we're in need of a new cleaning person. Please let me know if you know of someone to recommend.

Is anyone ready to welcome spring?

Sheila Mullineaux

From Reverend Barbara's Couch

A poem for these times, written by Rev. Lynn Unger, entitled "Breathe."

"Breathe," said the wind.
How can I breathe at a time like this,

when the air is full of the smoke
of burning tires, burning lives?

“Just breathe,” the wind insisted.
Easy for you to say, if the weight of
injustice is not wrapped around your throat,
cutting off all air.

*“I need you to breathe.
I need you to breathe.”*
Don’t tell me to be calm
when there are so many reasons
to be angry, so much cause for despair!

“I didn’t say to be calm,” said the wind,
*“I said to breathe.
We’re going to need a lot of air
to make this hurricane together.”*

These are troubled times, for our country, for our world,
for our community. Many of us are wading through
troubled times in our own lives – probably more of us
are carrying sadnesses or worries, losses or heavy
responsibilities than we know. That’s all part of life.

The wind – the Spirit, common sense, a cry for sanity,
whatever – tells up to remember to breathe. Not
necessarily to be calm, but just to breathe. To do the
thing(s) we need to do to stay alive, the thing(s) that will
give us enough stamina to take the next step, enough
courage to face the challenges, enough heart to
remember the good in life as well as the hard places.
Maybe even to breathe enough to become part of a
hurricane that blows some compassion and rationality,
some justice and even some love into the world. These
days, just breathe. And if your breath leads you to sing,
or cry, to talk with a friend or to
mutter encouragement to yourself, so much the better.
Just breathe.

Shalom and Salaam,
Rev. Barbara

Do you have photos to share for upcoming Newsletters or social media? We would love to share them. The file size must be less than 5000 KB.

[Click Here to Send Your UU Bennington Photos!](#)

March Sunday Worship Schedule

**March 2- Bruce Lierman
March 9- Rev Barbara Threet
March 16- Bill Christian
March 23- Rabbi Jarah Greenfield
March 30- Rev Barbara Threet**

March Shared Donation

Our March monthly offering will be shared with Project Against Violent Encounters (PAVE.) PAVE offers a wide range of services, including immediate assistance, referrals, and information, as well as emotional support. PAVE advocates also accompany victims of domestic or sexual violence to the hospital or police station, give support in court to explain procedures, and provide referrals to social service agencies where welfare benefits, food stamps, assistance with employment and housing and childcare can be found, to legal assistance, and/or to mental health counselors.

PAVE's Crisis Hotline - (802) 442-2111 is available to anyone in need 24/7 every day of the year, including holidays. Through its hotline, PAVE provides support and assistance to victims of violence and their friends and family.

PAVE also runs a Family Time Visitation Center. PAVE

believes that in most circumstances children need relationships with both parents as well as with extended family members. When appropriate, PAVE provides a safe and nurturing environment for such relationships to flourish, during monitored family time. Website: [Project Against Violent Encounters](#)

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Community Café. Erin Williams has joined the Community Café team as a coordinator with Jack Rossiter-Munley. You can't miss her with her colorful hair and bright welcoming smile. Clair Donatella, one of the original coordinators is still at the Café nearly every Saturday. She is now able to tend to long-wished-for features of the Café that just weren't possible when she was responsible for managing all the on-the-floor activities. You will find Claire upstairs in the second floor Café Boutique; which is now open each Saturday during Café hours.

As the Café audience grows, so is the group of people who contribute to making the Café the success it is. Every small and large gesture is appreciated. Here are some of the tasks and donations that make the Café click – and for which there is no such thing as too much.

IMMEDIATE NEED: Volunteer to take meal orders one Saturday a month from 1 – 3:15pm. You'll join the "Orders Team" of Janet Groom, Sheila Mullineaux and Mary Ellen Munley. Get in touch if interested: maryellen.munley0@gmail.com

CAN ALWAYS USE: Food donations. As many as 8-10 people each week prepare soups, casseroles, meatloaf, chicken dishes, stews, chili, shepherd's pie, salads, tacos, perogies , pies, cookies, puddings– you name it. The weekly community-created smorgasbord serves as the always-changing Café menu.

The choice of what to contribute is totally yours. Given

how many people are served, it is best to prepare your dish for at least 20 servings. The process is simple:

Decide what to prepare (or what to bring like apple cider, juice, fruit, snacks, etc.)

Send an email to communitycafe@gmail.com by 5 pm on Wednesday telling the organizers what you will bring

Deliver your contribution to St. Peter's (enter the red door on School Street) between 12:30 and 1 pm on Saturday.

Remember, everyone is welcome at the Café. So, think about dropping in for lunch or a snack, Saturdays, 1:30 – 3 pm.

Bennington Cares. Bennington Cares is working its way through the transition from being a group addressing an immediate, pressing need (police presence at Bennington Elementary School) to finding its role as an ongoing community service dedicated to contributing to the continual improvement of our schools. We continue to focus on the elementary schools.

Current activities include:

Two of our members volunteer in the schools – one at Molly Stark and one at Bennington Elementary on one or more days a week. One, a retired teacher is an invaluable asset to the school and is there nearly every day. The other is a newbie to being a part of an elementary school; she makes herself available one morning week for whatever is needed. So far, a highlight has been being a teacher's helper in a kindergarten class and doing writing activities and vocabulary learning games with the children.

Just this week, meetings began at Molly Stark for a 5th grade leadership project. Master Gardeners, Community Café and the Multicultural Center staff and volunteers will work with the students this Spring to plan and plant

a vegetable garden. Produce from the garden will be shared with the Community Café and the Molly Stark neighborhood. Bennington Cares is being asked to recruit 6 or more volunteers to assist with the project – especially maintaining the garden during the summer months.

Our main project now is working with the elementary schools and SVSU school district to increase opportunities for students to extend their learning outside of the classroom. There is a need to streamline the process of requesting and arranging a field trip; teachers need more easily accessible information about field trip learning opportunities in the region; and once trips are planned, there is a need for volunteer adult chaperones.

A small group of four Bennington Cares members are working, in collaboration with teachers, to research and prepare a customized field trip guide that the school district will print and distribute – along with professional development sessions about how to get the most out of field trip learning experiences. The goal is to have everything ready for distribution for next school year (September 2025) and to increase the number of field trips by 10 – 15% September 2025 – May 2026.

If you'd like to get involved with Bennington Cares activities, here are possibilities. Your time commitment can be a short or long as you like:

Volunteer to help with the Grow for the Café project.

Help with research, writing and/or editing the field trip guide.

Learn more about being a volunteer chaperone and consider going on one or more learning trips with students and teachers next school year.

Spread the word about Bennington Cares among friends and families who might enjoy helping in the schools.

Getting involved is simple: express interest to BenningtonCares@gmail.com. OR talk with Mary Ellen Munley or Sheila Mullineaux.

WHEN ICE COMES TO THE FELLOWSHIP

The Interfaith Council recommended a webinar which was produced by the Episcopal Divinity School. I was able to watch it. It is about how to handle ICE agents in case they show up at our Meetinghouse

EDS did not record the webinar but there is a link to notes from it near the end, as well as several links to additional resources.

<https://www.eds.edu/programs/when-ice-comes-to-church>

Sheila Mullineaux

WARMING PLACE

The Warming Place opened as planned and has been open each Monday and Thursday from 1 PM to 4 PM. It will continue to be open through April 17.

Each session has had between 0 and 3 guests, along with numerous visitors from community organizations such as United Counseling Services, the Turning Point and individual members of the community. Guests have enjoyed being able to get washed up; to don clean and dry socks, along with boots, gloves, hats, jackets and sleeping bags; collect toiletries; and sit for a while with a warm drink.

Thank you to everyone who has donated items for distribution. We currently have a great sock, glove and hat collection, along with lots of toiletries. Guests are often seeking deodorant if anyone has extra.

On Sunday, March 16, we will hold a De-Escalation Training at the Meetinghouse for all Warming Place volunteers from 11:30 to 1:30 PM. Members of the UUFB are also welcome to attend. The training will be presented by Devin Stevenson. Soup and bread will be available for lunch.

Thank you to everyone who has volunteered and otherwise supported this project.

Sue Andrews

KINDNESS RIPPLES THROUGH THE FABRIC OF HUMANITY

Think about the last time you took a moment to be kind...

Maybe someone dropped papers, and you helped them pick them up.

Maybe you held the door for someone.

Maybe you offered an encouraging word to someone who was struggling.

According to research from the University of California, San Diego and Harvard, the kindness likely didn't stop there. It "rippled" out into the very fabric of humanity.

**Apparently, our actions have consequences
Through three degrees of separation:**

You show kindness to Abe.

Because of that interaction...

Abe shows kindness to Barb.

Because of that interaction...

Barb shows kindness to Carol.

Because of that interaction...

Carol shows kindness to Dan.

According to the research, that is as far as it goes. (I'm not sure why Dan was the jerk to breaks the chain...)

But think about it:

**You engaged in one simple act of kindness...
But it impacted Barb, Carol and Dan.....people you might never meet!**

So what?

We are waiting for politicians or celebrities to change the world in some big grand gesture. That isn't how humanity works.

Our culture is the accumulation of tiny acts of kindness or cruelty, generosity or selfishness, grace or hate. So, find a way today to spread a little ripple of kindness through the fabric of humanity!

Source: Fowler JH, Christakis NA. Cooperative behavior cascades in human social networks. Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A. 2010 Mar 23;107(12):5334-8.

Reprinted by Ryan Dowd and submitted by Sheila Mullineaux

UPCOMING COMMUNITY SUPPER

As we go marching into March, one might think of Spring at least approaching, St. Patrick's Day festivities, and our next Sunday Community Supper, set for March 16, which as usual, is the third Sunday of the month. As always, we rely on your help, and a clipboard will soon be placed at the Welcome table at the Meetinghouse, where you can give your name, your degree of participation, and/or any food you might want to contribute, as always with our thanks. St. Patrick's Day food can be the general theme, but we welcome any nutritious dishes.

Food can be brought to the Second Congregational Church, the hosting site, by 4pm, and meals are usually distributed to our guests by about 4:30 pm. If it's more convenient, food can be left by the day of meal at the UUFB, where it will be picked up.

Questions or information can be directed to Bruce Squiers at 518-502-9446 or e/mail at squiers49@yahoo.

Thanks for all you do.

Submitted by Bruce Squiers and Kathy Duhon

AN APPRECIATION OF THE REVEREND WILLIAM BAUGHAN

Our many members who joined after 2000 will not have known him, but for those who were active in the 1990s he was unforgettable.

Bill was a solid speaker. His talks tended to be educational (one year focuses on the Greek philosophers). At the beginning of the year he would make a list of his sermon titles for the year and then produce them. He had an engaging personality, genial, and always ready to be helpful. He brought printed copies of his sermons for those who missed services or wanted to dip back into them.

When the UUFB moved into the large meeting room at the Bennington Free Library in the mid-1980s, we began to find ministers who would come to us to speak once in a while. With Bill, it was once a year, then several times, and then more frequently. This is a time when we met twice a month from mid-September to mid-June. We were small, but growing slowly.

Bill had a couple of full-time ministries, but then went to work for the State of Massachusetts as a child abuse investigator. He did that for 30 years.

He said his work for children was his vocation; preaching was his avocation. Many Sundays he could be found filling the pulpit at one or another church in Western Massachusetts, plus Bennington. For a time he was the part-time minister at the tiny North Adams fellowship. When that closed in the '80s, some of the members came to Bennington, so it was natural that Bill came too. He saw that we had an opportunity to become a more vibrant community, and he mentored us in that direction.

After several years of increasing visits to Bennington, Bill challenged us: he would come to preach twice a month, for a once-a-month fee, if the Fellowship would begin to meet weekly, develop a mission statement, and pass the basket for gifts. After a long meeting (without Bill) the 22 or so members present decided to take Bill up on his offer.

The period that followed saw steady growth—a growth which led, in the early 2000s to our group seeking a permanent home from which we could have a greater community impact.

In the early 2000s, Bill said he was going to shift gears a bit and we began to talk about recruiting a quarter-time minister. The Rev. Will Saunders joined us in the fall of 2005. We moved into our Meetinghouse in December 2005.

Our relationship with Bill was not formal, but it was solid, challenging and supportive. We just sort of slid into what was a very comfortable ministry—the longest we've had with anyone since then.

Submitted by Chuck Putney and Sheila Mullineaux

Go the Extra Mile

To keep ourselves and each other as safe as possible during this season of heightened infections, please take recommended precautions: getting vaccines, keeping hands washed, staying home when you have any symptoms or when you may have been exposed to an infected person, using masks, testing, and isolating, following the CDC protocols. This congregation has a generally older, at-risk population who are nonetheless quite active in the community and travel all over -- and we want to stay active! So let's take reasonable precautions. Remember that our services, meetings and classes are accessible online either regularly or when requested.



VOICES WILL BE HEARD- Hundreds of protestors gathered at Bennington's Four Corners on March 4 as participants in a 50501 (50 protests, 50 states, one day) grassroots movement to stand up, and be heard, for democracy. Numerous members of the UUFb joined in opposition to potential dictatorship efforts in the United States.

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

Sue Andrews March 12

Tim Marr March 13

Julie Haupt March 21

Please let us know when your birthday is - submit to kathyduhon2@gmail.com.

Thanks, UUFB Caring Committee

Services Are Recorded

Recent Sunday readings and talks are available as audio recordings. A link is provided on the Sunday Service section of our website, www.uubennington.org

Helpful Links & Community Information

If you see something below you think might be helpful to someone you know, share this newsletter with them - you can also share the external website link, too! Thank you for helping out your community by sharing resources they might find beneficial!

Are you a Young Professional seeking other YPs in the southern Vermont Community? Click here to connect via Shires Young Professionals!

New to Vermont? Want to help welcome newcomers to the Green Mountain State? Check out the Vermont Welcome Wagon Project!

Click Here for a List of Bennington County Resources!

Click Here to Discover Bennington County Food Resources!

Learn More about the UU Faith - Visit the Unitarian Universalist Association!



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