



April 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 May 2025 edition is noon on Monday, April 28. 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

Everywhere I go it seems that people are talking about the administration restructuring the federal government and the economy. Mostly they are expressing distress and bewilderment and a sense that they can't do anything about it. The priority of human dignity and commonality that we UUs value highly is missing, and

that's very disorienting.

We're also hearing other voices that say that the rule of law and the importance of civil rights are worthwhile holding on to. Organizations from AARP to the UUA (I can't think of any that start with X, Y or Z) are saying that we can, indeed, make a difference by getting involved by raising our voices both individually and collectively. So when we lately received the opportunity to sign on to a letter crafted by the ACLU of Vermont and widely supported by other organizations, including religious ones, the UUFB Board decided that this is something we can do to help prevent more destruction, at least in our state. In case you missed it, the ACLU letter is below.

The ACLU will be sending out a "tool kit" to all the signatories to help us take actions to back up this letter, so that becomes an ongoing effort. We will certainly share that when it comes. But, really, there's no need to wait. We can make phone calls, write letters, sign on to collective letters, help fund organizations, stand on street corners, stay informed, talk to our neighbors. We will be busy.

Sheila Mullineaux

ACLU Letter

March 2025

Dear Governor Scott and Vermont state legislators,

The second Trump administration has already done unprecedented damage to our democracy, violating bedrock constitutional principles and laws, and threatening the safety and well-being of our nation, our state, and our communities.

These assaults on our constitutional rights and democratic norms include unlawful attacks on immigrants, transgender people, and dissidents; threats to the autonomy of institutions to confront discrimination; the undermining of essential environmental protections; and the destabilization of civic infrastructure on which we all rely.

In the face of this rapidly escalating constitutional crisis, Vermont needs strong, responsive state leadership. We want you to know that if you speak up and take action to confront this onslaught of federal overreach, your constituents will have your backs. And we need to hear from you, our elected representatives, that you recognize this historical moment for what it is—and that you will act with the urgency and resolve that this moment requires.

We, the undersigned membership and community-based organizations, businesses, and faith leaders call on you to **utilize the power of your office to defend our democracy, our communities, and our values.**

Specifically, we urge you to publicly commit to:

- protect Vermont's immigrant communities;
- secure the rights and bodily autonomy of trans people;
- strengthen existing abortion access protections;
- defend our constitutional rights to protest, advocate, and speak out;
- safeguard our privacy and personal data;
- preserve our environmental protections;
- ensure Vermont's independence and autonomy from federal and executive overreach.

Vermonters pride ourselves on shared traditions of "Freedom and Unity." Our state has often led the way in expanding constitutional protections and defending the rights and liberties of all people, protecting our environment, and celebrating the power of our democracy.

We need you to join us in drawing on those traditions, defending our shared values, and meeting this moment with everything we have—together.

Respectfully,

From Reverend Barbara's Couch

Wendell Berry wrote: When despair for the world grows
in me / and I wake in the night at the least sound / in fear
of what my life and my children's lives may be / ...
I come into the peace of wild things / ... I come into the
presence of still water. / For a time / I rest in the grace of
the world, and am free.

There are plenty of thing these days which leave me
wondering – even fearing – what my life might be, and
my children's and grandchildren's. Life can seem pretty

bleak on the national and international level, with numerous threats and uncertainties.

And so, it has been an unexpected blessing to spend time outside clearing trails in recent days! A few weeks ago, this area of the western MA hill towns experienced a few days of very high winds. We had gusts up to 75-80 mph and more which caused a great deal of damage – trees down, wires down, roads blocked, structures damaged. Roads were absolutely littered with trees and branches: several were closed for days. But one of the blessings of living here is a large network of hiking trails that's developed over the years on adjoining state land. And when the storm finally passed, we found the trails littered with detritus as well. Dozens and dozens of large trees 2 feet or more in diameter uprooted, huge branches down. The trails have become almost impassable – unless one carries a chain saw and a sawzall and loppers and stops frequently to use them, which we, along with various neighbors, have done for several hours over the past days. It's been tremendously cathartic, this removing of obstacles and clearing of the way (and very good exercise too!) I feel connected to the earth again, my spirits are renewed – and despair is lightened. It has been a blessing, this dealing with the aftermath of the storm!

Pablo Neruda wrote:

Return me, oh sun / to my wild destiny, Rain of the
ancient woods / bring me back to the aroma and the
swords
That fall from the sky / the solitary peace of pasture and
rock
The damp at the river margins / the smell of the larch
tree [or in western MA, the pine and hemlock] / the wind
alive like a heart
Beating in the crowded restlessness / of the towering
araucaria.
Earth, give me your pure gifts / the towers of silence
which rose

From the solemnity of the roots.

Wendell Berry is right: the peace of wild things can bring balance and hope these days, in this case the wild trees and the stillness of the forest. It is a blessing.

**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!](#)

April Sunday Worship Schedule

**April 6 - Julian Hadley
April 13 - Rev. Barbara Threet
April 20 - Rev. Claire North
April 27 - Nancy Thompson**

April Shared Donation

The April offering will be shared with Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG). Founded in 1972, the Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG) is the largest nonprofit consumer and environmental advocacy organization in the state. For fifty years, VPIRG has brought the voices of everyday Vermonters to public policy debates concerning the environment, health care, consumer protection, and democracy. VPIRG's mission is to promote and protect the health of Vermont's people, environment and locally based economy by

informing and mobilizing individuals and communities across the state. Climate action, clean energy, environmental health, zero waste and reducing toxic chemical use are some of VPIRG's current initiatives. Earth Day is April 22, so please give generously.

2025 Annual Campaign

The Ways and Means Committee (Jim Stevenson, Roy Lauridsen, and Sue Andrews) has met and considered our budget for 2025-2026. A draft projected budget was developed and distributed to members of the Board at its March meeting. The Board voted to endorse the draft budget as our planning tool for moving forward with the Annual Campaign.

The Annual Campaign will take place during April and May. A series of Circle Dinners is planned so that UUFB members can meet in small groups to consider what the Fellowship means to each of us.

For more information about the 2025 Annual Campaign, please feel welcome to contact Sue Andrews.

WARMING PLACE

The Warming Place continues to be open Monday and Thursday from 1 PM to 4 PM. It will continue to be open through April 17.

We have continued to host as many as 3 guests at each session, along with visitors from community organizations.

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

Sue Andrews

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.

APRIL BIRTHDAYS

Sandra Mangsen April 1

Chris Hubbard April 3

Bill Christian April 14

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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