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Unitarian Society of Hartford
"Nourishing Spirit, Building Community, Working for Justice"

USH E-news: December 10, 2025

Photo by Kevin Girouard

Peace
Hope
Joy
Love

Sunday Worship:
December 14, 10:30 a.m.

"Peace… Hope… Joy… Love"

As we move forward through this holiday season, let us gather together to consider the themes of the season — Peace, Hope, Joy, and Love.

Sally Rogers, Pulpit Guest
Sue Smolski, Worship Associate
Meredith Neumann, Director of Music
Ben Mabrey, Pianist

Sally Rogers, Pulpit Guest
Sally Rogers is a nationally renowned singer, masterful songwriter, recording artist with numerous awards for her work, and an artist. She began her career as a full-time touring musician in 1979. She has toured coast to coast and internationally. Sally is an educator who taught music in her own classroom for fifteen years and now spends most of her time as a teaching artist with the CT Office of the Arts, Arts for Learning Connecticut (formerly Young Audiences), and Performing Arts of Northeast Connecticut. She received her Master's Degree in Creative Arts in Learning, i.e, arts integration in the classroom.

During the COVID epidemic, Sally created her "Song a Day Keeps the Virus Away" program to help folks sing their way through the difficult times. Every day at 4 p.m. she sang one song from wherever she happened to be at the time. These songs were livestreamed and are still available on YouTube.

Her songs are in both national music textbooks and the Unitarian Universalist and Quaker hymnals. Many are also featured in the folk "hymnals", *Rise Up Singing* and *Rise Again*. She worked with playwright Jo Carson, to compose music for four folk operas for a Mennonite community in Newport News, Virginia.

In 2017, Sally Rogers received the Magic Penny Award at the Children's Music Network Annual International Conference. This award is a tribute given to people who dedicated their lives to empowering children through music. The tribute program features songs written by or used by the recipient and informative appreciations of the recipient's work. More information can be found at sallyrogers.com

Sue Smolski, Worship Associate
Wishing everyone *Peace, Hope, Joy, and Love.*

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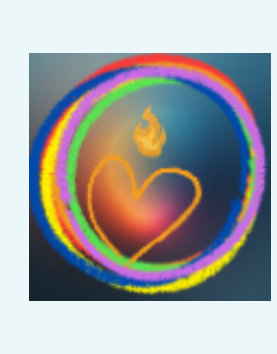

Matters of the Heart
To have a Joy or Sorrow read from the pulpit on Sunday morning, send the information to Matters of the Heart.

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Services are livestreamed every Sunday on Zoom and Facebook
Zoom info: Meeting ID: 931 0388 7934
Passcode: 128493
Virtual Coffee Hour to follow
*** Note: Zoom Coffee Hour ends at noon**
Past Services

Join us on Zoom

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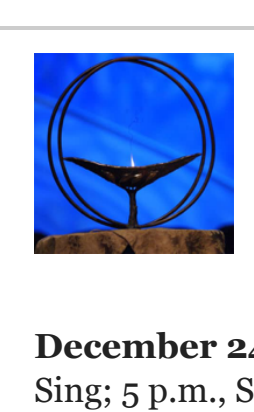
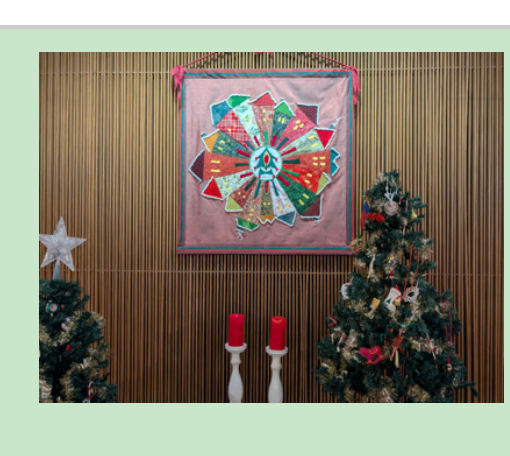


Upcoming Worship Services

December 21 – "Winter Solstice": The Divine Feminine, Michael Michaud, Dana Donovan, and Margaret Leicach, Worship Leaders

December 24, Wednesday, Christmas Eve Service – 4:30 p.m. Carol Sing; 5 p.m., Service. Reverend Bob/Laurie Kelliher, Worship Associate/ Meredith Neumann, Director of Music/Choir and Schola Singers/Ben Mabrey, Keyboards

December 28 – "Babylonian Farming Implements, the Musical", Reverend Bob/Deana David, Worship Associate/ Meredith Neumann, Director of Music/ Ben Mabrey, Pianist



Mid-week Message from Rev. Bob…

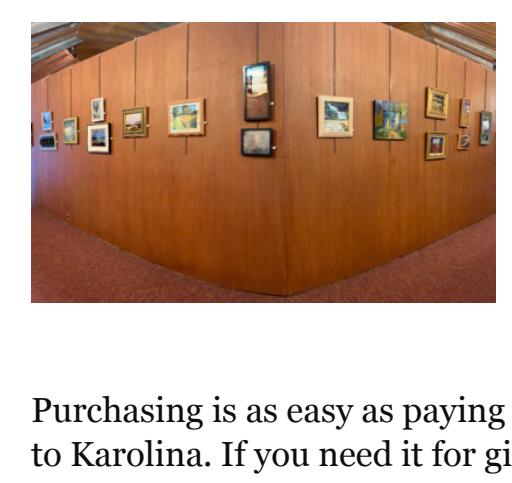
Well, our collective advent activity calendar has been busy this December – we've been singing carols, having special December services with all the trimmings (check out the *exquisite* chalice art tapestry made by Evan Williams, above) — and, lest we forget (and who *could* forget!) our amazing Yuletide Festival.

Our Yuletide festival featured gingerbread house-making, cookie decorating, Three Kings present-gifting, carol singing, music of all kinds, tree lighting, wreath and ornament-making, food galore, photo ops, quite the raffle, and Santa and Mrs. Claus. And so, so much more…we had just about everything in the Twelve Days of Christmas, including *"The Twelve Days of Christmas"*. It was quite a production.

But the production — the trimmings, the trappings, the *stuff* — wasn't what it was really about. We had all that so that we could have, as the writer of the Grinch put it, "a little bit more". And that little bit more is the spirit of community, the energy that comes when we're together enjoying the moment. It takes a *lot* of effort, in the middle of winter, to foster that kind of spark, but when it happens, it's magic.

So thank you to all our amazing magicians of the moment — there are dozens of you who put quite a lot of yourself into this day, and it's so, so worth it. And a warm, grateful thank you to Deana David, for spearheading all this. Here's to the spirit of Yule in our midst.

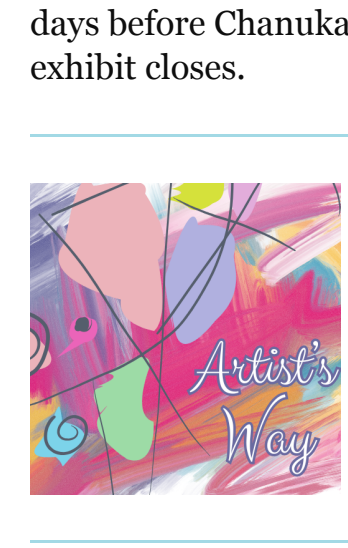
USH General Interest



Did you know?

A gift of art from our Ambulatory Gallery has extra benefits. Evocative and skillfully made, Lori Barker's art is on display in the Ambulatory until the end of December. The extra benefit is that thirty percent of your purchase goes to USH.

Purchasing is as easy as paying with a check made out to USH and delivered to Karolina. If you need it for gift-giving this holiday season you can pick it up a few days before Chanukah or Christmas. Otherwise, we will continue to show it until the exhibit closes.



Artist's Way invites anyone who'd like to bring your lunch and watch the movie, *What Happened, Miss Simone* this **Friday, December 12**.
Lunch at noon in Fellowship Hall then view the film in the Teen Room next door.

WHALE RIDER

December 12 –
Pizza & Movie Night

Our December feature selection is ***Whale Rider.*** IMDB's website summary reads "*A contemporary story of love, rejection and triumph as a young Maori girl fights to fulfill a destiny her grand-father refuses to recognize."*

There's still time to sign up — contact Janice Newton (janicecnewton@gmail.com or 860/212-6923) **NO LATER** than **noon** on Thursday, December 11.

Come at 5 p.m. for POPCORN & SODA; we'll eat at 5:30, and start the movie at 6:30. There's usually a short discussion following the film. $15 3 slices PIZZA, SALAD, AND DESSERT (or $5/slice)

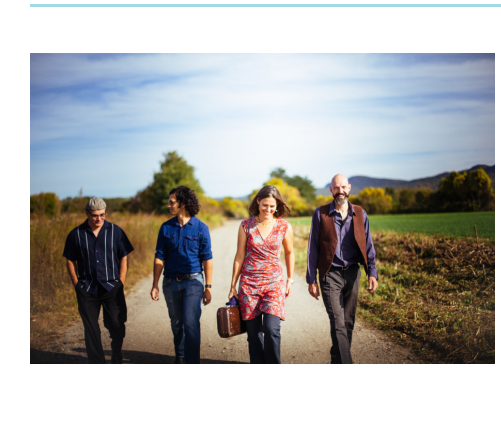
Magdalene Circle
Saturday, December 13

Magdalene Circles meet on the second Saturdays of the month, 2-5 p.m.

Are you interested in expanding your intuition? Tuning into your inner voice? Exploring the Divine Feminine aspects of yourself? Learning sound meditation as a relaxation practice? We invite you to try us out.

Participatory sound, with small drums, Tibetan bowls, rattles and voice, is incorporated in the practice. Beginners are welcome. Extra instruments are available to borrow. As an ongoing group since 2008 you are encouraged to contact **Lisa Burch** for orientation prior to your first meeting with the group. A free-will donation is requested, to be directed to USH.

DECEMBER 16 —
LUNCH BUNCH
The Lunch Bunch will meet on **Tuesday, December 16 at NOON** in Fellowship Hall. Bring your own lunch and beverage and share conversation and community. Looking forward to seeing you there. Janice Newton



MHP — Rani Arbo
& daisy mayhem

Friday, December 19
Click HERE for more information

Harmony, rhythm, indelible songs – these are the hallmarks of Rani Arbo & daisy mayhem, the New England based folk quartet now in its 17th year. From the Newport Folk Festival to the California World Music Festival and beyond, this band's steadfast brew of wit, camaraderie, and musicality leaves audiences everywhere humming and hopeful, spirits renewed.

Rani Arbo & daisy mayhem are Rani Arbo (fiddle, guitar), Andrew Kinsey (bass, banjo, ukulele), Anand Nayak (electric and acoustic guitars) and Scott Kessel (percussion). At the helm, Arbo is "blessed with an unmistakable voice, both light and sultry, with a hint of tremolo and smoke" (Acoustic Guitar). With Kinsey and Nayak's vibrant baritones and Kessel's resonant bass, the band's signature lockstep harmonies can shake the rafters or hush the room. Arbo's fiddle is sweet and sinewy, while Nayak's guitar stretches across genre lines. Kinsey's old- time bass anchors the deep groove of Kessel's homemade percussion kit — a truly funky collection of cardboard boxes, tin cans, caulk tubes, packing-tape tambourines, bottle-cap rattles, Mongolian jaw harps, and a vinyl suitcase.

In the lineage of string bands who blur the boundaries of American roots music, Rani Arbo & daisy mayhem have always been standard-bearers, with a particular knack for pairing words and music. From bluegrass barnstormers to sultry swing, old-time gospel to bluesy folk-rock, they consistently turn in lush arrangements with "stylish, unexpected choices" (Acoustic Guitar). Original songs fit seamlessly aside artful re-workings of Georgia Sea Islands music, Hank Williams, Leonard Cohen, Bruce Springsteen — just a few of the many places this band is willing to go.

Doors open at 6:15 for people with prepaid tickets and at 6:30 for general admission. Shows start at 7:00.

Tickets to individual shows can be purchased in advance and they will still be available at the door starting at 6:30. Tickets are $25.

Blessed Yule

Twilight Fire Circle
Yule Celebration

Saturday, December 20, 2025
Gathering begins at 3 p.m.

Join us in joyful celebration of the return of the light!

There will be a Yankee grab bag. If able, please bring a wrapped gift of $15 or less. As always, ritual will be followed by a potluck dinner. Everyone is welcome to bring a dish to share with others.
Neither a gift nor a dish is required to join us in celebration.

We want to remember those who are less fortunate than us. We will be collecting donations of canned or dry goods for the Horace Bushnell Food Pantry in Hartford. Please, give from your heart as you are able.

Everyone with an open heart is welcome to our celebration. If all you can bring is yourself – then – so mote it be! Feast and be merry!

Would you like a relaxing Sound Bath?
We invite you to come if you're curious…

Lisa Burch, Terry Nicholas, and Edie Jemiola will be offering a **SOUND MEDITATION with Tibetan Singing Bowls** on **Sunday afternoon, January 4**, after coffee hour, at **12:30 p.m.** for 60-75 minutes. Wind down with a unique sound bath and meditation with the Tibetan singing bowls and tingshas, Himalayan sacred sound instruments. Reiki, drumming, vocal toning. Chimes and a crystal pyramid will be prominent as well. Build your ability to experience the present moment more fully, clearing your chakras and releasing what no longer serves you. Renew and rejuvenate in this powerful energy. Remember everything is Vibration! Allow yourself to be nourished in this healing, sound cocoon with instruments and voice.

Bring a mat, pillow and blanket if you wish to lie down. Chairs will also be available. Prepare to enter a *zone of deep relaxation*. This accesses a powerful portal of healing in the deep space within each one of us. *Allow this Space for Grace!* A **donation** is requested, suggested $10/15/20 according to your ability. Advance registration is encouraged for space planning. Walk ins as space allows. We're meeting in the **Meditation Room**. Call or text **Lisa Burch, 860-985-9719** or email, spiritmattersct@outlook.com to register or get more information.

Lisa Burch, a USH member and retired clinical social worker/psychotherapist, has enjoyed singing and playing instrumental music since she was a child. She loves exploring global healing and spiritual practices, particularly mindfulness, sound meditation, vocal toning, labyrinth walking, and The Divine Feminine. Terry Nicholas, a retired neonatal intensive care nurse, offers private sound and Reiki sessions at Meg's in Manchester. Edie Jemiola retired from a corporate position to offer integrative medicine at a local hospital. She continues to enjoy teaching Reiki as well as offering sound healing meditations at Willington Public Library. Edie has recorded a number of sound meditationCDs. This intuitive trio weaves sound and energy together into a dynamic and nurturing experience.

UUnderWorld
December 2025

The **UUnderWorld** began nearly two years ago as a monthly online-only publication to fill in the gaps left by **UUWorld**. **UUWorld**, the official UUA publication, comes out quarterly and does not take reader submissions of any kind. John Miller started **UUnderWorld** recognizing that UUs needed a place for our thoughts and ideas, a place for lively debate and discussion. The **UUnderWorld** is published with a "take what you like and leave the rest" attitude. The magazine gives voice to an international readership of UUs and other spiritual liberals and encourages contributions from all points of view.

In the December issue, USH's Judy Robbins has an article about spiritual activism. To see the issue, click here December 2025 UUnderWorld and if you like what you see, consider subscribing. Subscriptions are all word-of-mouth and there are no ads.

No Sing-Along Meeting in December

See you in January 2026!

E-News Holiday Hiatus

Late in the year, when holiday festivities are mostly in memory and the earth holds its breath awaiting the year to come, the ***USH E-News*** takes a little break in its publication schedule. Staff takes well-deserved vacation time and the editor catches up on household chores.

Therefore, the *E-News* will appear as usual, next Wednesday (12/17); ***then*** we will be off until **January 7, 2026.** Worship Reminders will continue as usual, and if anything arises which calls for immediate notification of the congregation, an e-brief will be issued.

What this means for program leaders and others who organize events, is this: please get us any relevant material for end-of-December/first half of January gatherings or other items of interest, ***by December 14!*** That way, USH can start 2026 well-informed as we move forward together.

Thanks for your consideration!

~ Tina Davies, Editor

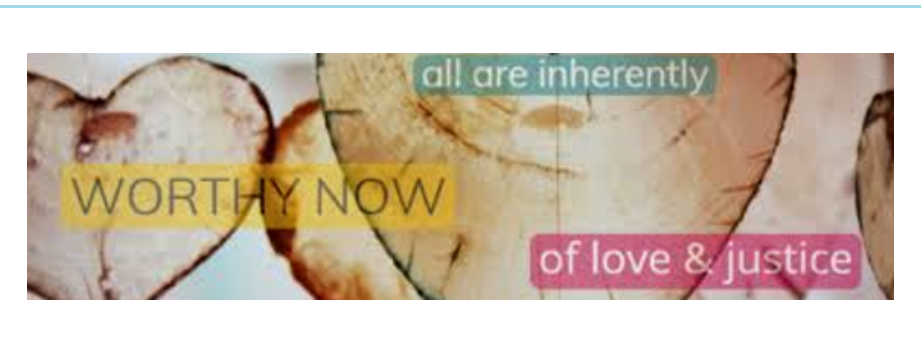
The first annual Yuletide Festival was a hit! New and old friends enjoyed a festive morning buzzing around the rotating crafts and music — until the grand finale dance and magical tree-lighting. The Sanctuary finale was a riot of good humor and goodwill that, like the Grinch, made our hearts grow at least three sizes!

Social Justice

December Good Neighbor Offering (GNO) — Hawkwing

For 25 years, Hawkwing has served the People of the Cheyenne River Sioux/Lakota Tribe (CRST) in South Dakota by providing resources to enhance health and education, end hunger, reinforce clean water infrastructure, and empower individuals to overcome generational oppression through programs focused on personal and community development.

Founded by Rochelle Ripley of Glastonbury, to fulfill a promise to her Cheyenne River Sioux/Lakota grandmother, Hawkwing's vision is for the tribe's members to have the opportunity to live healthy, fulfilling lives that are free from generational trauma and hardship.



Write Holiday Messages to Incarcerated Unitarian Universalists

Worthy Now Prison Ministry
https://worthynow.org/

Powered by
Church of the Larger Fellowship, UU
https://www.questformeaning.org/clfuu/

For many, the holiday season can be a particularly lonely time. Those who are experiencing incarceration are often particularly vulnerable to isolation and loneliness. You can make a real difference! Show incarcerated members of the Church of the Larger Fellowship that you care this holiday season.
Join us in Fellowship Hall after the service to send a message of shared community to someone in need.

Horace Bushnell Update

Since 1978, the pantry has been in the same location, utilizing space that the church allows. In 2024, they received a grant to actually make a space dedicated to just them! The room was completed during summer and fall this year. There's a spanking new look: flooring, painted walls and ceiling, a desk and chair for doing paperwork, lots of shiny new metal shelving (before, they had old wooden tables in shared space) and best of all, a huge freezer and a huge refrigerator! In our current government environment of no grants, no giving, everything is empty and waiting. What is received in donations and from Food Share is put out and is given out within a day or two.

In this time of great need and giving, please do all you are able to do. It is so welcomed by our neighbors!

Gratefully, Diana

Religious Exploration

USH
RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION

TEACHERS NEEDED FOR SUNDAY: Please let me know if you would like to teach.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14: Youth will learn about Islam. We are meanwhile still trying to fix a convenient date for a mosque trip.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21 IS SOUP SUNDAY: Soup Sunday just before Christmas. There is so much need for what our young people (guided by John B.) are doing!

SATURDAY, JANUARY 24, 6 p.m. – SUNDAY, JANUARY 25: OVERNIGHT CON INTO SOUP SUNDAY: (SAVE THE DATE) Youth pre-selected movies, games, foosball, video games, fun! **(see flyer)**

SATURDAY & SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21/22: SKI TRIP: (SAVE THE DATE): SKI BUTTERNUT – local (see flyer): details to follow

SATURDAY, MARCH 21, 2 p.m. TO 11 p.m.: NIGHTLIGHT Mission (see flyer): details to follow

FRI JUNE 26 – SUN JUNE 28: SUMMER RE RETREAT TO BOSTON & WALDEN: Don't miss this amazing retreat. Written details will follow (we have time) but the attached flyer will give you an idea. This is where we will be staying: Luxury Living at its Best in Extra Large Estate - Houses for Rent in Southborough, Massachusetts, United States - Airbnb

USH Resources

Unitarian Society of Hartford
50 Bloomfield Avenue, Hartford, CT 06105 (860) 233-9897
Website: www.hartforduu.org
Email: office@hartforduu.org

Office Hours:	**Minister**
Monday – Thursday 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Sunday 9 a.m.– 2 p.m. Call/Text: 860-539-5729	Thursday 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. Friday 9 a.m. – noon or by appointment. Call/Text: 860-539-1259

Board Meetings are held on the
Fourth Monday of the month, 6:30 – 8 p.m.
Next Meeting: December 22

2025 – 2026 USH Board of Directors —

Nina Elgo: President
Virginia deLima: President-Elect
Jon Covault: Treasurer
Gloria Mengual: Secretary
Laura Cipriano: Community Within Council Chair
Laurie Kelliher: Membership Council Chair
Rocco Orlando: Finance Council Chair
Michael Michaud: Spiritual Life Council Chair
Paul Cipriano: Administration Council Chair
Judy Sullivan: Social Justice Council Chair

Have a question or comment for the board? Send an email to: ushboardofdirectors@gmail.com.

Click HERE to view the USH Directory, Reports, and other church business information online. You will need the user ID and Password to access these documents. **Contact the Office for the username and password.**

Financial reports for FY 2025-2026 have been posted;
click HERE to view.

See the 2024/25 Annual Report HERE

The Board Meeting Minutes can be found here.

Link for Welcome Team Sign-Up Genius

USH Staff:

Rev. Bob Janis, Minister
minister@hartforduu.org | 860-233-9897 ext. 103
Cell: 860-539-1259

Karolina Wojtysko, Church Operations Manager
****Away December 19 - January 5***
office@hartforduu.org | 860-233-9897 ext. 100
Cell: 860-539-5729

Meredith Neumann, Director of Music
musicdirector@hartforduu.org | 860-966-2453

Shahan Islam, Director of Religious Exploration
shahan@hartforduu.org | 860-233-9897 ext. 104

Patty Peck, Bookkeeper
ushtreasurer50@gmail.com

The deadline for USH E-News submissions is 5 p.m. Monday!

Please write in the 'Subject' field "USH E-News", and include the dates that your submission should be featured. Announcements about upcoming events appear for two consecutive weeks **maximum**, unless other arrangements have been made with the editorial team.

When forwarding information concerning an "outside" event or organization, **please pre-edit your copy** in order to keep the piece to 200 words or less. Note that **all material is subject to editing** prior to publication. **Also, please submit editable material** (text and images separately, rather than "poster" format).

Articles should be sent as email file attachments, (MS Word preferred) and images need to be sent separately as jpeg, jpg, png, tiff, bmp, or gif files.

Thank you for your cooperation.
Editor-in-Chief: Tina Davies
Production and Technical Expertise: Karolina Wojtysko

The calendar for **December** can be viewed **HERE.**

Please consult our Online Calendar regularly for all upcoming events coordinated by the Unitarian Society of Hartford.

Visit our **Happenings** page on the website for more details.

Unitarian Society of Hartford | 50 Bloomfield Ave | Hartford, CT 06105 US

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