



The H E E D

September 2025

Newsletter of the Durham Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

Hymn For The Hurting by Amanda Gorman

Everything hurts,
Our hearts shadowed and
strange,
Minds made muddled and mute.
We carry tragedy, terrifying and
true.
And yet none of it is new;
We knew it as home,
As horror,
As heritage.
Even our children
Cannot be children,
Cannot be.
Everything hurts.
It's a hard time to be alive,
And even harder to stay that way.
We're burdened to live out these
days,
While at the same time, blessed to
outlive them.
This alarm is how we know
We must be altered —
That we must differ or die,
That we must triumph or try.
Thus while hate cannot be
terminated,
It can be transformed
Into a love that lets us live.
May we not just grieve, but give;
May we not just ache, but act;
May our signed right to bear arms
Never blind our sight from shared
harm;
May we choose our children over
chaos.
May another innocent never be
lost.
Maybe everything hurts,
Our hearts shadowed & strange.
But only when everything hurts
May everything change.

Submitted by Rachel Legard

Join Our Services at 10:00 AM Sundays

September 7 - Susan Bullivant - Water Ceremony

From the UUA site: "Members bring to the service a small amount of water from a place that is special to them. During the appointed time in the service, people one by one pour their water together into a large bowl. As the water is added, the person who brought it tells why this water is special to them. The combined water is symbolic of our shared faith coming from many different sources." You are invited to bring water you collected this summer. But no worries if you forget - we'll have water at the Fellowship to use as well. *Susan is a long-time member of the Fellowship.*

September 14 - Rev. Larry Brickner Woods - "A Poet Looks at 70"

A newly retired minister looks over the arc of a life in the context of these turbulent times.

Larry is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ and served for 22 years as the Chaplain and Executive Director of the Waysmeet Center @ UNH. He has spent the past six years as the Interim Minister for the Lee Church Congregational and the First Congregational Church of Wakefield. Prior to that he spent 20 years in local government, primarily as a Town Manager in Virginia, Vermont and New Hampshire.

POTLUCK after service

September 21 - Larry Vogelmann - "On Unitarian Universalism"

Discussion of some aspects of Unitarian Universalism: Is it really a faith? Can you be a UU and an atheist? *Larry is a long-time member of the Fellowship.*

September 28 - Jane Poland and Debbie Davis - "On Immigration"

Discussion of work that their Church is doing in accompanying immigrants and other ways of helping the immigrant community.

Jane and Debbie are from the Community Church of Durham.

Socials Committee

Potluck – To celebrate the new Fellowship year and to enjoy being together again, there will be a potluck following the service on September 14. Please bring something to share if you can; however, everyone is welcome!

Coffee hour – As regular attendees know, DUUF has a coffee hour following the service where there is conversation along with coffee, tea, and snacks to enjoy. There are three essentials for this to be successful: willing participants, coffee makers and snack providers.

DUUF has a small core of people who are happy to come a little early to get the coffee set up. **We could use some more coffee makers.** As the adage goes “many hands, make light work.” I am happy to show willing volunteers the ropes and I’d love to add two or more names to the roster. At the end of September, I will be passing around a calendar so that members and friends can sign up to bring snacks.

Paper bags and Green Sanctuary – If you have extra paper bags that you can donate to the fellowship, coffee hour could use them. In the kitchen there are blue recycling bins under one of the counters. They are labeled: Paper and Plastic. There are two trash baskets in the kitchen. One is lined with a plastic bag and trash goes in there. The other is lined with a paper bag and has compost written on the sides. Compost, that is —food scraps and our brown compostable paper cups go in there. Often on Sundays, the basket for compost is in the Fellowship Hall where coffee hour is— just to make it easy for everyone. There are industrial composting containers at the Durham transfer station, and we bring our compost there. Every little bit helps, I hope.

Some people prefer to use real coffee cups during coffee hour. That’s fine. Helping to wash those coffee cups is even more wonderful.

So come to DUUF, enjoy the service, enjoy food and good fellowship with friends, and volunteer to help the system work well. Thanks!

Carol Bullivant for the Committee

House Committee

This is a very brief overview of the House Committee to familiarize folks with how our space is cared for.

The committee is comprised of several people with their own finite area to handle. Maria Isaak has been the House Use Scheduler for many years. She works with anyone renting space in the sanctuary, fellowship hall or RE rooms in the basement. This can include music lessons, recitals, weddings, weekly meetings for AA, dance, and exercise classes. Jon Babon has taken over the Grounds position and is responsible for almost everything outside of the building, such as lawn care, garden maintenance and snow removal. Contractors and volunteers are used as needed. Nick Isaak and John Macri are on the committee to help fill in where needed. As House Chair, I take care of the leased rental office spaces, follow up on scheduled systems maintenance, resolve problems that arise and work to make improvements to the house.

I also serve as the Nominations Chair and found that people often seem reluctant to take on these positions, possibly due to misunderstanding about what is entailed. You do not need to be a handyman or a man at all to do any of these rewarding jobs! Please don’t hesitate to ask me for more information about these or any other positions.

Sarge Legard



The Six Sources Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote:

1. Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
2. Words and deeds of prophetic people which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;
3. Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
4. Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
5. Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;
6. Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.



Unitarian Universalism is a living tradition that has changed in many ways from the original Christian roots of its Universalist and Unitarian heritages, and it continues to evolve today. Most recently, this evolution has taken the form of adopting new language to describe who we are as UUs. At General Assembly in June 2024, UUs voted to replace the existing Seven Principles and Six Sources language in our

bylaws with language describing Unitarian Universalism through these shared values:

Interdependence: We honor the interdependent web of all existence and acknowledge our place in it.

Pluralism: We are all sacred beings, diverse in culture, experience, and theology.

Justice: We work to be diverse multicultural Beloved Communities where all feel welcome and can thrive.

Transformation: We adapt to the changing world.

Generosity: We cultivate a spirit of gratitude and hope.

Equity: We declare that every person is inherently worthy and has the right to flourish with dignity, love, and compassion.

The Seven Principles

Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote seven Principles which we hold as strong values and moral guides. We live out these Principles within a "living tradition" of wisdom and spirituality, drawn from sources as diverse as science, poetry, scripture, and personal experience.

As Rev. Barbara Wells ten Hove explains, "The Principles are not dogma or doctrine, but rather a guide for those of us who choose to join and participate in Unitarian Universalist religious communities."

- 1st Principle: The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
2nd Principle: Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
3rd Principle: Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
4th Principle: A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
5th Principle: The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
6th Principle: The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
7th Principle: Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

The seven Principles and [Six Sources](#) of the Unitarian Universalist Association grew out of the grassroots of our communities, were affirmed democratically, and are part of who we are.



Happy 200th Anniversary, American Unitarian Association!

On Sunday, May 25, 2025, many of us were enjoying the warm sunshine and a sense of accomplishment from a successful program year, as well as good food and camaraderie, at our annual picnic, hosted by Maria and Nick Isaac. On the very same day the UUA was celebrating a historic anniversary for our religious tradition--the 200th anniversary of the founding of the American Unitarian Association (AUA)! And in Britain UK Unitarians were celebrating the 200th anniversary of founding of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association!

The AUA was founded to spread the principles of Unitarian religious liberalism and to aid with charitable work in those communities where Unitarian congregations existed. Inspired by William Ellery Channing's defense of liberal religion, as elucidated in his 1819 Baltimore sermon*, a group of prominent liberal pastors pledged to meet to discuss forming a "Unitarian convention or association." However, that meeting failed to take place, due to disagreements among those invited--e.g. Channing opposed the creation of an association**. However, some of the younger ministers continued to pursue the idea, and at a smaller gathering on May 25th, 1819, their plan was presented and approved.

Though it's always worth celebrating anniversaries (and sometimes difficult to remember or pinpoint their actual date), our current Unitarian-Universalist tradition has evolved significantly from the values and concerns of this earlier AUA organization. It's also important to remember that Unitarianism is but one branch of our tradition. The other 'branch'--the Universalist tradition--with which Unitarians merged in 1961 is, in fact, older; the Universalist Church of America was founded in 1793. And, as we are a living tradition, adapting to changing times and needs, we can be expected to continue to change, and to continue to struggle over our distinctively differing views of what constitutes liberal religion.

* Channing's Baltimore Sermon may be read at <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=coo1.ark:/13960/t4qj80w9z&view=1up&seq=2>. The UU World also contains an article by Elaine McArdle on the impact of Channing's 1819 Address on Unitarian-Universalism at <https://www.uuworld.org/articles/baltimore-william-ellery-channing-sermon-unitarian-universalism-history-general-assembly>

** you may read an amusing--and inventive--account by Nancy McDonald Ladd of how such a meeting might have proceeded at <https://www.uuworld.org/articles/he-said-he-said-nancy-mcdonald-ladd-unitarian-universalism-aua-200-anniversary>



President's Message

Welcome back to the Durham UU Fellowship. At a time when there is so much to worry about in our country, community is more important than ever. I am really excited to be back in our DUUF community. Sunday mornings offer the opportunity to learn something new and reflect on our values. The support we give to each other is a comfort and joy, both in giving and receiving. The work we do together, both to keep our Fellowship operating and for social action, contributes to my sense of purpose in making the world a better place.

Speaking of work, the DUUF board and committees have been hard at work throughout the summer. A very committed program committee has lined up great Sunday programs! The socials committee has coffee, snacks and activities ready to go and could really use a few more volunteers to occasionally make coffee. The house committee has lined up needed work on the building and handled rentals. We hope to grow our population of young people and the RE committee is ready to find connections with any young people we have. The membership committee is working on connecting with current members and welcoming in new members.

Please notice our updated outside look with the new stone wall along the Madbury Road sidewalk. Although the town designed, commissioned and funded this wall, it did take a committed group of us working together with them to get to the final result.

All of this work takes many of us, and if you are not currently involved, please consider finding a way to help. If you have not been attending regularly, we would love to see you this fall.

Rachel Legard

Two Views of Our New Wall on Madbury Avenue



UUA 2025 General Assembly

by Deborah Johnson, 2025-2026 Denominational Affairs Coordinator

The 2025 General Assembly (GA), with its theme **“Meeting the Moment”**, was held in the Baltimore Convention Center from Wednesday, June 19th through Sunday, June 21, 2025. This year’s meeting utilized a dual-platform format with a reported 2483 attendees on site in Baltimore and 800 attendees online. This year the Durham Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (us!) did not send any credential delegates to GA; nor were there attendees from our Fellowship. Though I am providing a report of GA activities and decisions, neither John nor I were able to attend, as we had last year, and there were no volunteers to replace us.

Why might this be matter of concern? Well, at General Assembly the UUA’s member congregations fulfill their mandated responsibility to “decide upon overall policy for the UUA” and to “direct and control the [UUA’s] affairs”. To this end, credentialed delegates attend multiple General Business sessions that report upon the state of the UUA budget, the work of various UUA teams, committees and commissions as well as new and proposed initiatives. Delegates discuss these matters and carefully review, and choose among, nominees for important UUA leadership positions. In the absence of delegates our congregation had no say in UUA policy and UUA’s affairs this year.

Although this is unfortunate, it is worth noting that many UUA “member congregations” fail to send their allotted delegates to General Assembly. In recent years, fewer than 50% of the allotted delegates have attended General Assembly. Thus, very important decisions have been made by a minority of the Unitarian-Universalist congregations and organizations eligible to participate.*

However, the takeaway--to my mind--should be that we really need volunteers to step up and take on this responsibility for DUUF and for the future of Unitarian-Universalism. So please consider participating--as a delegate--in next year’s virtual 2026 UUA General Assembly which will be held, in a new format, during the period of June 14-21, 2026. What might be some of the benefits of doing so? Here are some positive comments (paraphrased) about participation in the 2025 GA gleaned from an internet search of reports to their congregations:

“I felt a deep spiritual camaraderie with other attendees, many of whom I was meeting for the first time . . .”

“The exhibition hall had 75-100 tables hosting groups advocating for social justice issues. This was really uplifting and conversations with many at these tables re-fueled my passion for

social justice work”
“[in workshops] it was helpful to hear stories, filled with lots of practical examples, about the ways in which some congregations were thriving in our times”
“The Ware Lecturer [journalist Imara Jones] provided clarity how the anti-trans movement arose as a political wedge issue and inspired me to draw upon my UU values in disarming hostility toward transgender people”

“I celebrate our UU values of pluralism and interdependence with a special joy when I attended a Christian worship service, followed immediately by participating in a nearby pagan service.”
“The Virtual Hymnal Sing Out session [celebrating the UUA’s release of their new subscription-based virtual hymnal] filled me with joy!”
“I left GA inspired and hopeful about UUs and our aspirations. And I left with many questions and ideas for how we can more fully live out our values in our congregations and our daily lives.”

Brief Summary of Business: for some further detail, as well as descriptions of other GA programming, please consult UUA World’s recap of the 2025 GA at <https://www.uuworld.org/articles/uua-ga-2025-recap-vote-results-statements-actions-unitarian-universalism>

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I. UUA Budget Overview

Although I could not ascertain whether a UUA officer presented and discussed their proposed 2026 budget, documents on the UUA site indicate that the UUA is continuing to operate with a deficit budget. During the 2024 budget year the UUA faced a substantial budget deficit (between 4.3-5M dollars). The projected deficit for the 2025 Budget Year is smaller, but still significant and higher than previously projected (current forecast of 1.8-2.7M dollars). The 2026 proposed budget currently has a projected deficit of 1.7-2.5M dollars.

II. Responsive Statements

Responsive statements are brief, advisory statements that express the sentiment of the delegates in response to a report by an officer or committee at a regular General Assembly, but do not become UUA policy nor commit the UUA to specific actions. Two such statements, designed to meet the moment, were issued at the 2025 GA.

- Concerning the June 18th Supreme Court decision [in the U.S. v. Skrmetz case] to “curtail the rights of transgender people” Rev. Dr. Sofia Betancourt, the UUA’s president, stated: “The Supreme Court’s decision today will irreparably harm transgender youth by allowing states to deny them the kind of care they need for their physical and mental well-being”.

Condemning the June 21st US military strikes against Iran as representing “a moral failure” that UU’s are “compelled through our religious beliefs to speak out against”

III. Congregational Study Action Issues (CSAI)

are issues selected by GA delegates for three years of study, reflection and action. The purpose is to provide member congregations of the Association with an opportunity to mobilize energy, ideas and resources around a common issue. The goals are to develop a deeper understanding of our religious position on the issue, a clear statement of Association policy as expressed in a Statement of Conscience, and a greater capacity for congregations to take effective action. Three CSAIs were proposed and though the decision-making process required a second vote, the following CSAI was eventually affirmed.

- Abolition, Transformation, and Faith Formation

IV. Articles of Immediate Witness (AIWs)

AIWs are statements about a significant action, event, or development in the world that necessitates immediate engagement and action among UU member congregations and groups (without requiring the commitment of UUA resources). Five proposed AIWs were offered; the following three were adopted:

- “We Declare and Affirm: Immigrants are People who Have Inherent Worth

and Inalienable Rights”

(99.2 percent of votes)
• “Faithful Defiance of Authoritarianism, a Call to Action: Reaffirming Our Covenants for Democracy and Freedom!” (98.3 percent of votes),

- “Defending LGBTIQ Freedom Amid Funding Crisis: A Call for Global Solidarity” (98.3 percent of votes),

V. Election of UUA Leadership

In recent elections, the UUA’s election slates tended to consist of unopposed candidates. This year, voters were presented with a choice between candidates for the important role of Moderator. The co-moderator team of Rev. Kimberly Quinn Johnson and Bill Young were elected to a six-year term. For other UUA leadership positions--Board of Trustees, 4 positions; Nominating Committee, 3 positions; and Commission on Appraisal, 4 positions--the slates consisted of unopposed candidates. All nominees were elected/affirmed.



Meet Our New Vice-President - Mary Downes



A relative newcomer to the Fellowship, Mary Downes was appointed Vice President by a unanimous vote at the Aug. 6th board meeting. She said that she volunteered because “I saw a need that I could fulfill and felt it would be a stimulating and rewarding challenge.”

Mary explained that signing the Membership Book here in April represented the first congregation of any denomination she has ever joined. Her husband Christopher Dunning also joined at that time. He occasionally attended a UU church growing up, but didn’t become an active UU until the late 1980s in Burlington, VT.

“In figuring out how to best persist in, and resist, what we perceive as a descent into potential authoritarianism, Christopher and I decided that we needed to find a community where we felt at home, and supported in both a political and spiritual sense. We had been to the

UU church in Portsmouth, both for events and services, and as welcoming and as lovely a community as it is, we found it more formal and ‘churchy’ than we were seeking. We knew from past experience that UUs are in line with our spiritual beliefs, so with a bit of trepidation, we decided to come here to the Durham UU and see what it was like. After the first Sunday, we really never looked back,” she said.

Describing what she finds attractive about our Fellowship, Mary said, “In the short time I’ve been involved, I’ve been really impressed by the programming organized by DUUF. This is a really wonderful community that I wish more people knew about and participated in, even if they don’t consider themselves members. Our country and our whole world need to build community now more than ever, and DUUF provides a safe, welcoming, affirming, no-pressure environment located in downtown Durham. I don’t want our community to be a secret, so I would like to see attendance increase, and membership grow over the coming years.”

She shared her early impressions about the Fellowship by saying, “I feel like there is a bit of a sense of sadness and concern at not having more members, not having more young families with kids, there being too many responsibilities spread

among too few people, the ‘old guard’ wishing there were younger members to pick up the mantle, and a sense of not quite knowing how to bring about the change that is needed to sustain our congregation. I think there are ways to bring new people in, and lots to learn from other UU communities. I hope that I can bring a fresh perspective and energy.”

Mary offered some suggestions on how to address these concerns. We should schedule more Circle Dinners, gather more frequently outside of the Fellowship building, have more targeted outreach to find new members in adjacent communities, and work at more cross-pollination with the UU communities in Concord, Exeter and Portsmouth.

Mary has served on the NH Peace Action board, the NH Sustainable Energy Association (now Clean Energy) board, and the board where she served as chair of Haven, an organization dedicated to preventing sexual assault, domestic violence and stalking. She has also served on the Energy Committees of Goffstown and Durham, NH.

Growing up in Weare, NH, she was raised in a family where her mother was Church of England, and her father and paternal

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grandmother were Catholic. Going to church was not a tradition in her immediate family. She attended a private secondary school in Manchester, NH and went to college in Philadelphia at the age of 17.

When asked about her religious beliefs, Mary said she wrote on her personal essay to enter college that science was her faith. Her current beliefs have been heavily influenced by Quaker, Gnostic and Buddhist ideologies. "It seems entirely plausible that comprehensible answers might be beyond our species entirely. It's understandable that we've been filling in the gaps with faith since the beginning of (human) time," she said.

"As I get older, my desire to have a logical explanation to everything has decreased, and I'm more comfortable accepting that I don't understand, and may never understand, and that humanity itself may never be able to explain the deepest mysteries and most profound questions. Even so, that shouldn't stop us from reaching for transcendent understanding from the prophets, shamans, mystics and poets who have been interested in the same questions for a very long span of time, and who have, in many ways, discovered more than all the physicists, biologists and brain scientists combined," Mary

added.

She met Chris in 1989 in Burlington, VT, but they didn't start dating until a couple of years later. They moved to San Francisco in 1994 and were married in 1997. They moved to Concord, NH in 1999, after their daughter Haley, who now lives in Philadelphia, was born. They also have a son Rowan, who graduated from UNH in 2024, and currently resides with his parents in Madbury.

Mary is employed by Unitil in Portsmouth where she helps oversee the company's energy efficiency programs. She also is responsible for ensuring that the company complies with what it has said it would do, following all the rules, regulations and expectations of the NH Public Utilities Commission and the MA Department of Public Utilities. In coordination with all the other gas and electric utilities, Unitil delivers Mass Save and NHSaves programs to their customers in both states.

When she is not at her job, Mary said she finds many personal satisfactions. "I love writing, reading, finding great restaurants, walking in the woods and identifying mushrooms and birds and plants, biking, kayaking, hanging out with my family, traveling, watching movies, learning, and resisting the onslaught of an authoritarian government so that we can

all continue to pursue our happiness," she noted.

Summarizing her thoughts about the Fellowship, Mary said, "I like the diversity of Sunday programming, I like being surprised, I like that the Program Committee (on which she is now serving) fills in with its own programming if a guest speaker is a no-show, and I like the contemplative readings, the poetry, and the meditation. I like that we are not being preached to, and that we do not take ourselves too seriously, but that we are also earnest in our concern for others, and for the world in general. I also like the Q&A and the conversation that spills over into the coffee hour afterwards. It's all very down-to-earth, approachable and inspiring. It feels like home."



DUUF Officers, Chairpersons and Council Coordinators, and Members of Committees and Councils for 2025-2026 - Under 2023 amended by-laws

BOARD OFFICERS

President: Rachel Legard

Vice President: Mary Downes

Treasurer: Jen Pavlik

Secretary: Bob Bullivant

COMMITTEES

Program: Dawn Meredith (Chair), Betty Crepeau, Mary Downes

Religious Exploration: Bob Pavlik

House and Grounds: House: Sarge Legard (Chair), John Macri; Grounds: Jon Babon;
Rentals: Maria Isaak

Socials: Carol Bullivant (Chair), Deb Johnson, Tom Reicheld

Membership: Tom Reicheld (Chair), Rachel Legard; Caring Subcommittee: Chris Rodgers
(coordinator) Dawn Meredith, Susan Bullivant, Carol Bullivant

COUNCILS

Nominations: Sarge Legard (Coordinator)

Music Council: Maria Isaak (Coordinator)

Green Sanctuary: Mike Fleming (Coordinator), Nick Isaak

Social Action: Dawn Meredith (Coordinator), Betty Crepeau

Communication & Outreach: TBD (Webmaster), Bob Bullivant (HEED Editor)

Marketing Subcommittee: Chip Noon, Susan Noon

Denominational Affairs: Deb Johnson (Coordinator)

DUUF Durham Housing Association Representative: Susan Noon, Secretary

Our Mission Statement

The real test of our religion is the way we live our lives. The Durham Unitarian Universalist Fellowship affirms the seven principles of Unitarian Universalism:

We seek to be a place in which each person's unique worth and beliefs are acknowledged and respected and where each person's voice may be heard – a place in which each may freely explore his or her own spiritual path. We join with others in reaching out to make the world more just, and commit ourselves to caring for the earth and all that makes up the web of life. We strive to be a source of inspiration, a forum for intellectual exchange, a wellspring of comfort to those in need and a nurturing, supportive community for each other and our children.



Durham Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

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