

NEWS & VIEWS

September, 2020

Unitarian
Universalist
Church
of Rutland



President's Letter

As I write this letter, I am preparing for the annual board retreat. This year the focus will be on connection; how to build, strengthen, and maintain it while we are not able to meet in-person, inside the church. At our meeting earlier this month, the Board voted to suspend in-person, indoor church services, meetings, and events, at least until late next spring. While heartbreaking, this decision is also liberating. We can now focus our energies and imagination to (re)create ways to be together in community, while apart.

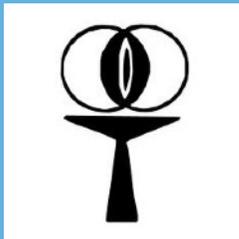
We are also preparing to have our first virtual annual meeting. Scheduled for Sunday, September 20 at 12 noon, it will follow the Sunday service on Zoom. Details about how we will disseminate the information and manage the voting will be forthcoming. As we have found with the Sunday services, this will make it easier for some and harder for others to participate. We will look for ways to make sure all who want to take part are able to.

There have been changes to the Board of Trustees this summer. It was with deep regret that the Board accepted the resignation of

Theresa Krieger. Theresa has been a vital member of the Board; serving as secretary and ardently advocating for the adherence to policy and inclusion for all. Her focus, commitment, and sense of humor will be missed. Linda Bryant has been appointed by the Board to serve the remainder of Theresa's term. Linda has also graciously offered to take over the role of secretary, for which the rest of the Board is grateful.

Lastly, the Board voted earlier this month to establish an endowment fund for the church and to invest it in the UUA's Unitarian Universalist Common Endowment Fund (UUCEF). As part of the UUCEF, we can be confident that our existing reserves will be invested in line with our UU principles and values. We will also have an appropriate fiscal account into which to receive memorial gifts and end-of life bequests. Over time as our endowment grows, the income it generates will help to bridge any gap that appears between income and expenses in our annual budget.

Continued on the following page...



**Unitarian Universalist
Church of Rutland**

775-0850

<http://rutlanduu.org>

uuvt@myfairpoint.net

Minister:

Rev. Barbara Threet

President:

Kimberly Bushnell 235-9626

Interim Vice President:

Luther Brown

Moderator:

Joan Eckley

Treasurer: 265-3205

Diane Sander 459-2919

Secretary:

Theresa Krieger 683-7794

Trustees:

Rebecca Mattis 773-3535

Yvonne Brunot 747-7244

President Emeritus:

Herb Ogden 293-2510

Church Secretary:

Tejal Dholakia

Available by appointment

President's Letter, continued

In recent years we have relied on the Ministry Reserve Fund to fill this gap, and that Fund will likely be depleted in the next few years. The establishment of this endowment will help ensure the future financial stability of the church.

These are indeed trying times, but may they also be times of restoration and renewal. May we as a church and as a community find strength in each other, grow together, and come out the other side stronger and more resilient.

Kimberly Bushnell

kimberly.bushnell@icloud.com

802-287-0168 (cell phone)



Photo by Darren Rouse

**“Human nature is like water.
It takes the shape of its
container.”**

-Wallace Stevens

From Reverend Barbara's Couch...

Well, at least we know a little more about what we're dealing with as we plan this coming church year.

The last time we met in person was at the worship service on March 8th, when we broke into small groups and brainstormed what UUCR means to us. A few weeks ago I came across the minutes of our March 9th Board meeting, where we spent time discussing how to address a coronavirus that was just becoming a major news focus. We decided that for the next few weeks, we'd switch to paper cups at coffee hour and forego any snacks so we wouldn't inadvertently be touching. We decided we'd set up hand sanitizing stations and we wondered how we'd find enough hand sanitizer, which

was already reported to be in short supply. We figured we'd need to institute these measures for a while, maybe even several weeks. The situation felt so dire – and our responses now, in retrospect, seem so optimistic. How I wish those sorts of measure had been enough!

Now we know a whole lot more. And there's a tremendous amount we don't know – this virus has affected humanity for only 8 or 9 months. However, we do know how it will impact our church in this coming year.

We know we will not be meeting in person, indoors, in our beloved building. Not for worship, not for Board

meetings, not for dinners or social events, not for at least several months. The Board will monitor the situation: we are all hungry to meet in person, and we're also determined not to do so until we can do it without risking one another's health and even lives, or that of our families. We're an older congregation: easily half of us are in some "high-risk" category. Part of caring for our UUCR community right now, sadly, is remaining apart physically, especially in enclosed spaces.



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We know we will continue to hold worship each week online. Committees will continue to meet on-line – I've attended meetings of the Board, the Sunday Service Committee, and the Membership Committee in the past week.

(Is 'attended' the right word? Maybe 'participated in' is more accurate? How do verbs and prepositions work in this Zoom world?) A dozen of us went hiking a few weeks ago, masked and socially distant but able to see one another in person, and we're planning another hike later this fall. Many of us are regularly in touch by phone or email, we're taking walks together or meeting outdoors. There were several on-line services this past summer, and some informal coffee-hours also. All of these maintain our congregational life, and also our individual emotional health through this time.

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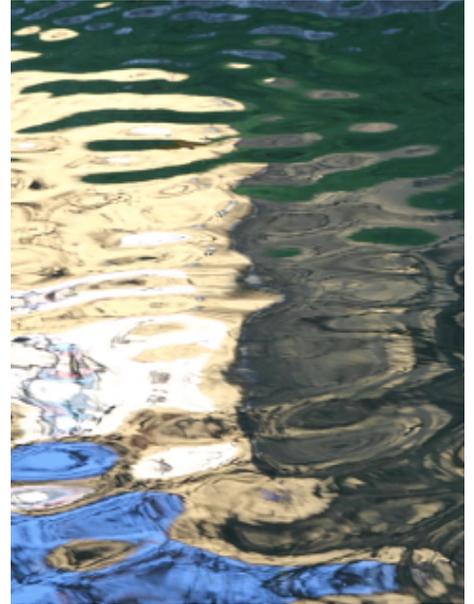
From Reverend Barbara's Couch, continued...

At the Board Retreat on August 29th (on Zoom), we'll be imagining what else we can do this year, and we welcome your ideas. Here are a few of mine, and I welcome your feedback:

- A quiet mid-week meditation/vespers Zoom experience on a regular basis – weekly? bi-monthly? –open to all three congregations that I serve. That could be both a daytime and an evening event.
- Resuming emails of letters and poetry (more likely weekly than 2-3 times a week as I did last spring).
- Teaching a monthly class on-line – Building Your Own Theology? UU History? UUs and Bible? What interests you enough to attend, or what other topic might draw you to participate? How about informal Gather-On-Zoom-For-Dinner evenings on a regular basis – break-out function to form us into groups of half a dozen or so for relaxed, free-flowing conversation.
- Possible game nights (Pictionary? charades? or?), or Zoom open mic nights?
- A regularly-scheduled political discussion group, for those who want to delve in together?
- Or...?

I'd love to hear your ideas (brthreet@gmail.com), or send them to Kimberly, our Board President. And we'll keep you posted! In the meantime, stay well and stay in touch!

Shalom and Salaam,
Rev. Barbara



Virtual Festival from ART

Vermont Actors' Repertory Theatre presents a virtual short play festival via Zoom on Friday, September 11 at 7pm, Saturday, September 12, at 7 pm, and Sunday, September 13 at 2 pm. The festival is free of charge and open to the public. Talk backs with playwrights, performers and directors will follow the Saturday and Sunday performances. The Friday performance is our full dress rehearsal. The festival theme is "A New Fabric for Our American Quilt" and features pieces from Vermont playwrights to include: Jeanne Beckwith, MaryBeth McNulty, Pamela Formica, Marisa Valent,

and Erica Furgiuele. Their work is fresh and timely in many cases being performed for the first time here. The festival coordinator is Alex Nicosia and the September festival is directed by Jaden Rogers and Wendi Stein and stage managed by Ruth Ann Pattee. This festival showcases the talent of over 20 actors to include locals and performers from across the state. We have planned two more virtual short play festivals for November 13-15 and February 5-7. Zoom links will be available through our facebook page (Vermont Actor's Repertory Theatre), our website www.actorsrepvt.org, or by emailing actorsrepvt@gmail.com. We hope you can join us!

Announcements

ANNUAL MEETING

Mark your calendars now. We have set a date for our postponed annual meeting. It will take place rain or shine on **Sunday, September 20, 12pm**. What is not known at this point is whether it will take place in person, online, or as a hybrid of the two. We are exploring ways to hold our annual meetings safely and legitimately during a pandemic. There are plenty of examples to look to as other UU Churches hold their own modified annual meetings, and the UUA has a section of their website to help guide us. There are ways we can vote digitally or by mail to make sure everyone's voice is heard. We will let you know, when we know, how we plan to proceed. In the meantime, this is a call to **Committee Chairs** to write up your reports sooner than later, while the church year is still fresh in your minds.



RE FACEBOOK GROUP

The RE Committee will be focusing efforts this 2020-2021 church year on building a new community of local liberal parenting adults. We have started a new Facebook group, "Rutland

Area Social Justice Parents". We hope to network with families who live in the area, to share resources and strategies for raising the next generation with a principled conscience and a bent for justice. We also hope that engaging the larger community in this way will attract families to join in person, once we start holding in person RE events again (someday!).

MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

Over the next several months we will be updating the: Church Directory, Birthday List and Phone Tree. So if there have been any changes to phone/cell numbers, email address, mailing address, et al please forward these to Tejal [@uuvt@myfairpoint.net](mailto:tejal@uuvt@myfairpoint.net). Also if you have not been receiving your subscription to UU World, let us know about that as well.

ABOUT THE PHOTOS...

In this issue, we focus on the symbolism of water and how vital it is to all life on Earth. The power of peaceful waters to soothe our spirits is also evoked. Photos are borrowed liberally from the world-wide web, and where credited, that credit is maintained in UU News&Views. The editor is grateful to their sources for lending their beauty and visual concepts to our humble newsletter.

September Birthdays

20th: Erin Robbason

and all other September birthdays...

BEST WISHES!

“COVID Blues” getting you down? How about getting to enjoy other people, AND the splendor of the natural world? Try one of these activities!

Return to “Spirit in Nature”

Most of the people who went to Ripton for the Spirit in Nature service in August suggested another visit up there in foliage season. So we'll meet there again on Saturday 3 October at 1:30 p.m. The rain date is Sunday 4 October at 1:30 p.m.; that leaves enough time for the drive and a quick lunch after the Sunday service and virtual coffee hour. The tentative plan is to walk the Buddhist (.23 mile), Christian (.26 mile) and Interfaith (1.5 mile) paths, then maybe the Friends (.24 mi.) and Muslim (.18 mi.) or Jewish (.19 mi.) paths on the other side of Goshen Brook. If that's not enough, there is the nearby Robert Frost path, a 1.2 mile partly handicapped accessible loop over the Middlebury River.

To comply with our COVID-19 guidelines for outdoor meetings, please tell Herb at hogden@vermontel.net, 802-293-2510 if you plan to attend.

Details: Meet at the Spirit in Nature parking lot, on the Goshen-Ripton Road about half a mile south of VT 125 in Ripton. Driving time from Rutland is about an hour. Spirit in Nature is a network of woodland paths begun by Rutland's Minister Emeritus, Paul Bortz. Paths have signs with quotations, some from religious texts, others from scientists, poets, even an architect, to broaden our understanding of the natural world and our role in it, placing the current state of our lives and of the world, in the context of the timelessness represented by the forest, the river, the sky, and the seasons. Bring children! More information on Spirit in Nature is at <http://www.spiritinnature.org>.

Bring masks and water. If you choose to unmask while walking, you must re-mask when we stop to discuss a saying or poem along the way. There are good lunch locations at the Spirit in Nature's Great Circle and at the Robert Frost trailhead, so you may want to have a picnic there before walking the paths.

Herbert G. Ogden
(802) 293-2510

Take Part in Climate Action Day with 350 Vermont!

We have two activities planned for September 25th Global Climate Action Day:

- Friday Sept 25th noon - 1 pm UU Church, 173 West St., Rutland - Peaceful, non-disruptive demonstration in support of action against climate change. Masks and social distancing required. The parking lot at the UU is reserved for paid users, so please park elsewhere.
- We're asking everyone to go to their favorite spot in nature (or one of the suggested trails below) and send us a selfie. Consider holding a sign saying why that spot matters to you or telling the legislature what you want them to do about climate change. You don't have to make this trip on September 25th itself, but send us your photos by September 26th so that we can share them.

Beautiful walks/ hikes close to Rutland:

- Bald Mt. Trails (Notch Rd., Mendon)
- Pine Hill Park (Overlook Trail above Rocky Pond is especially nice)
- Long Trail from Route 4 North or South, any distance
- Long Trail, route 103 (cross the pedestrian bridge and walk the half mile up to the viewpoints of the valley)

- Pittsford Trails, especially the one to North Bald Peak
- Bucklin Trail - take Wheelerville Rd. for about 4 miles from rt. 4. Look for parking lot / trailhead.
- Canty Trail - Take Turnpike Rd. in Mendon about 1.5 miles - look for trailhead on the left. Pretty trail that eventually leads to a waterfall and later, summit views from Blue Ridge Mt.
- Accessible trails close to Rutland include the Rutland City bike path, which lends itself to lots of bird/waterfowl sightings, and the rail trail from Castleton to Poultney
<https://www.alltrails.com/us/vermont/ada>

And join us for our regularly scheduled meeting on Sunday September 6th at 3 pm to discuss more of our plans for the Global Climate Action Day.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82424426395?pwd=bkovRHA3NlVoRzJGTDExMU44SkpUz09>

Meeting ID: 824 2442 6395

Passcode: 186808

See you there!

Heather

Secretary, 350 Rutland County

Poet's Corner

“First Lines of Emails I’ve Received While Quarantining”
by Jessica Salfia

In these uncertain times
as we navigate the new normal,
Are you willing to share your ideas and solutions?
As you know, many people are struggling.

I know you are up against it:
the digital landscape.
We share your concerns.
As you know, many people are struggling.

We hope this note finds you and your family safe.
We’ve never seen anything like this before.
Here are 25 Distance Learning Tips!
As you know, many people are struggling.

Feeling Fiesta today? Happy Taco Tuesday!
Calories don’t count during a pandemic.
Grocers report flour shortages as more people are baking than ever!
As you know, many people are struggling.

How are you inspiring greatness today?
We have a cure for your cabin fever.
Pandemic dial-in town hall TONIGHT!
As you know, many people are struggling.

Mother’s Day looks a little different this year.
You’re invited to shop all jeans for 50% off!
Yes, buy 1, get 1 free!
As you know, many people are struggling.

Call us to discuss a loan extension without penalty.
ACT NOW: tell Congress Charters should Not Line their Pockets During the COVID crisis.
Now shipping facemasks as recommended by the CDC.
As you know, many people are struggling.

This is not normal.

UUCR Board Meeting Minutes May 11th and 21st

May 11th: Board Members Present: Theresa Krieger, Rev. Barbara Threet, Herb Ogden, Yvonne Brunot, Diane Sander, Kimberly Bushnell, Rebecca Mattis, Joan Eckley.

Treasurer's Report: Our loss is now \$6,400, down from the \$12,000 reported last month. Diane projects further improvement since a portion of this was due to front-loaded expenses. Motion by Rebecca Mattis, seconded by Theresa Krieger, to pay our employees their usual monthly wages for June. Passed unanimously. Donations are down due to not meeting in person; the collection plate is not happening. The tax credit is for 50% of wages paid to employees up to \$10,000. This goes through the end of the year. The church will get a tax refund. Canvass has gone well; pledges are up to \$54,455. Diane has budget requests from committees. RE has requested \$500 for a contra dance but might not need that amount. The budget doesn't look that bad, with a \$12,000 loss projected. We have not heard from Horizons Early Learning Center about needing more rent help. We might have the auction in the Fall every year now since that would no longer conflict with any other fundraisers and would be further from the Canvass so it would spread out the times of year we're asking people to open their wallets.

Minister's Comments: Barbara is doing more emailing with people since the recent situation began. She's been having good conversations with lots of people.

Committee and Task Force Reports

Canvass Committee: Cathy Thomas reported the pledge drive is going well. There have been 34 pledges, 24 of which were increases for a total of \$53,895. (This changed a bit since the email, thus the higher number in the Treasurer's report.) Last year pledges totaled \$50,874. A 10% increase would be \$55,961. The committee haven't heard from several who usually pledge, so we may meet our goal.

Membership: asked for input on the following: a Zoom program with Barbara for RE kids, a new member service via Zoom and tracking calls made by Membership, Pastoral Care, and the Minister. None of these are happening at this time.

Sunday Service Committee: Conducted a survey to get input about summer services. Many interested in services every other week. They have been planning a Solstice service. Might also want to plan other outside services and activities on Sundays when there isn't a service. Previous vote suspended all in

person activities until the board votes have in-person activities again.

-Motion Herb Ogden, seconded by Rebecca Mattis, to allow the Sunday Service Committee discretion for outdoor activities. Concerns expressed about safety and governor's restrictions. Desire expressed for in-person connection opportunities, suggestion that if in-person events are limited by governor to ten it could be limited to the first ten people who sign up. Concerns expressed about vulnerable church members. Opinion expressed that they would stay home, that people decide for themselves. Opinion expressed that board should take lead on reopening decisions. Question raised of why Sunday Service would be allowed full discretion for activities even beyond holding services while others committees can't hold such events. Suggestion that anyone with a creative idea for connecting should be allowed to go for it. Suggestion that we authorize the Solstice Service and see how that goes first. Concern expressed that people might not remain 6 feet apart. Suggestion that there's only a danger if people are in close proximity for a longer period of time. Vote called – Motion passed 4-2 with 1 abstention.

-Motion by Rebecca Mattis, seconded by Herb Ogden, to allow any committee to hold any group event that follows the governor's guidelines. Discussion of indoor concerns, regulations. Motion amended to add requirement to wear masks inside. Passed 4-3.

Old Business

Zoom: We need a plan to schedule Zoom and share the use of it. Tabled until next month.

Trustee Vacancy: Tabled. We also need a Vice President. No volunteers. Suggestion this could be part of what we ask Leadership Development to consider in recruiting someone. Tabled until next month.

Delegates: Barbara Threet, Kimberly Bushnell, Herb Ogden, and Cathy Thomas are registered for General Assembly. We are allowed two voting delegates. (Barbara is already a voting delegate.) Suggestion Kimberly, as our new president, should be a delegate. Suggestion Herb would be good to have as a delegate if anything comes up about consolidating Districts to Regions. Motions by Theresa Krieger, seconded by Rebecca Mattis, to appoint Kimberly and Herb as our voting delegates. Passed. Need to appoint delegates for other meetings. Tabled until June meeting. We have \$425 available in Leadership Development funds. This can help cover delegate registration got G.A. Herb and Kimberly declined reimbursement. Will reimburse Barbara \$150 registration fee.

Continued on the following page...

UUCR Board Meeting Minutes, cont...

Actors' Repertory Theatre: Kimberly and Herb are working on the contract renewal. ART wants to continue using the space if they can. Motion Herb/Diane to give Kimberly and Herb authority to negotiate but not finalize a contract. Passed.

New Business

Minister's Contract Renewal: Kimberly and the Committee on Ministry are working on this. Barbara has suggested adding language:

"Should the congregation or the minister deem it unsafe or unhealthy to meet in person due to coronavirus, weather or other similar cause, or should government regulations or recommendations in either the church or the minister's home states make in-person gatherings unwise or illegal, then the minister will make herself available for usual church activities via Zoom, email, phone, or whatever other electronic means are deemed appropriate and available by the minister and the church Board." The board has no objection to such language being added. (Though it was noted "church" should be "church's".) Barbara is planning a sabbatical, possibly in January but could be switched to a different month. She plans to take this at time when it's safe to be out and not locked down.

Horizons Early Learning Center (HELIC): Liaison Ed Safford was in contact with Kimberly and is looking for guidance about negotiations with HELIC on lease renewal. Given the continuing uncertainty, Ed is inclined to not push and take about any agreement we can get. He suggests that we renew the lease for the \$1500/month as in the recent lease and include a clause that says something like as long as the State doesn't allow them to operate at full capacity, the rent can be reduced to a mutually agreed amount and they can continue to use the community room. (They are currently paying \$1000/month for April and May since we've lowered it to help them stay in business during the current pandemic.) We had hoped to negotiate a two year lease this year but given the uncertainty Ed suggests asking for a one year lease and accepting a shorter term if they can't commit to a year. Motion Herb/Rebecca to authorize Ed to negotiate a lease renewal according to his recommendations. Gratitude expressed to Ed for his work on this. Passed unanimously.

Small Group Ministry: There's been some discussion of doing small group ministry to keep people connected during this time. Rebecca will reach out to Sara Meling and Luther Brown about this.

Worker Training: Tejal and Mike have state mandated training to be able to be in building. Jessie and Barbara should do the training as well. Perhaps volunteers too.

May 21st: Board Members Present: Theresa Krieger, Rev. Barbara Threet, Herb Ogden, Yvonne Brunot, Diane Sander, Kimberly Bushnell, Rebecca Mattis, Joan Eckley.

The Board focused on the pandemic and whether to allow in person events. There was discussion of Concerns, Fears and Goals. Concern was that changing to have in person events would put people unnecessarily at risk. The goal was to keep people healthy and to reach out to community in different ways to expand the church. Disagreements about interpretation of letter from the UUA President advising churches to prepare for a year of doing church virtually. Noted that Governor is still asking non-profits to operate virtually. Vermont order is on the governor's website. Concern expressed that virtual gatherings just don't work for some people's needs. Suggestion we can create our own guidelines that might be stricter than the governor's particularly requiring masks as the governor has chosen not to make this a requirement. Suggestions to limit any indoor activity to ten, require masks at all activities, require six foot distancing, prohibit other activities at the same time as regular Zoom service, prohibit singing, prohibit carpooling. Concern raised about how we would communicate guidelines and ensure they are enforced, pointed out that we've sometimes not communicated or followed policies we've thoughtfully crafted. Concerns raised about having any indoor activities. Questions raised regarding Buildings and Grounds and how they would continue their work. Suggestion to differentiate between maintenance and events. Motion by Rebecca Mattis, seconded by Theresa Krieger, that Rebecca create a list of guidelines for church sponsored events and for maintenance with such requirements as we've discussed, send these out to the board for additions as necessary, that we vote within a week. Guidelines will remain in effect until Board changes them, a form will be filled out and sent to the president for events and maintenance meetings. And this policy will be widely disseminated. It will be clear we will not hold indoor meetings except for maintenance, our employees, or as approved by the president. Committees will only be able to get together in person for work that cannot be done without being in person. Passed unanimously. Motion by Herb Ogden, seconded by Rebecca Mattis, to rescind vote to allow committees discretion to hold gatherings. Passed unanimously. Motion by Herb Ogden, seconded by Diane Sander, to suspend any new indoor rentals other than HELIC until the Board votes to reinstate rentals. Passed unanimously. Motion Joan Eckley, seconded by Diane Sander, to appoint Luther Brown to the Board and to appoint him as Vice President until Annual Meeting. Passed unanimously.

Upcoming Services: September

September 13th: Rev. Barbara Threet “Ingathering/Water Ceremony”

We’ll hold our traditional Ingathering Water Ceremony in a non-traditional way, on Zoom – instructions will be emailed closer to the event date. But **SAVE A BIT OF WATER**, as usual, and also **GATHER A PEBBLE** from somewhere that you encounter regularly in these days.

September 27th: Jerry Byrd “Green Island”

We’ll be joining with the UU Fellowship of Bennington via Zoom for this service. Jerry is a passionate, long time climate change activist, particularly through Net Zero for Vermont by 2030. He’ll share his work with us all, as well as exploring ways for each of us to make our planet healthier.

October 4th: Rev. Barbara Threet “Balancing the Karmic Scales”

By the early 1800s, ‘Universal salvation’ was understood to mean that all souls would eventually rejoin God, rather than languishing in hell for eternity. But does that mean people who’ve done really horrid things get off too easily? How is that fair to the people who’ve lived with kindness and compassion? We’ll explore that controversy,

and our own opinions now. The UU Fellowship of Bennington will be joining us on Zoom.



“Water Dancing” by Rob Gonsalves

October 11th: Rev. Barbara Threet “Experience or Revelation”

There were a few ‘Unitarian Controversies’ actually, but we’ll focus on the impact of the Transcendentalists on what had been a clearly Christian sect. By the 1830s and 40s, who were we becoming - were we leaving Christianity behind? We’ll be joining the UU Fellowship of Bennington on Zoom for this service (and in May 2021, we’ll repeat this two-week sharing of services with UU Bennington, when Rev. Barbara will speak on related topics).

October 20th: J. P. Cass “Science and Times of Unreason”

We may seem to be in a strange era when both science and unreason are flourishing - though it may not be without precedent. How does humanity move forward in the 21st century, including tending to our deeper needs?

Upcoming Events

- September 11th, 12th and 13th Actor's Repertory Theater's "Virtual Short Play Festival"
- September 20th Annual Meeting (virtual)
- September 25th 350 Vermont Rally in the churchyard (in person)



NEWS&VIEWS
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS OF RUTLAND
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