

## **SUMMER 2021 @ UUSGS**



**UNITARIAN  
UNIVERSALIST**  
— SOCIETY OF —  
GREATER SPRINGFIELD

We made it! This far anyway, right?! Time for some **REST!!!**

Often, as a part of our weekly worship services, we say the following:

*“We hope you find this congregation to be a place that helps you to find and keep your balance.”*

Embracing this idea of balance, and building on the sacred rite of a sabbath, we have decided to give our leadership - professional and laity - the month of July off. Off from work anyway.<sup>1</sup> Opportunities for fellowship (religious code for “hanging out”) abound, however... and we hope you will take some time to engage with one another socially throughout the month in whatever way feels right for you. After all, relationship is at the core of everything we do at UUSGS, and taking some time to re-engage gently and joyfully after a difficult year-and-a-half just feels right.

### **So, what is not happening during July?**

- Sunday services
- Board meetings
- Capital campaign meetings
- Leadership team meetings (e.g., Beacons)

### **What is happening during July?**

- In-person Sunday picnics @ UUSGS
- Online meet-ups w/ Rev. Julie-Ann
- Meditation, Tai chi, Tuesday lectures
- ...and more!

Other social opportunities will be added throughout the month. For example, we’re looking into group tickets to a local baseball game. Updates will be posted on our web calendar (<https://www.uuspringfield.org/events-calendar/>) and on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/UUSGS>).

Have kids? Great! Darcie has created some summer scavenger hunts based on our principles (<https://www.uuspringfield.org/summer2021-uusgs/>). The UUSGS Family Forum on Facebook is also a great place to connect with others during the summer months (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1432498686964965>).

Have an idea for a gathering? Great! Contact Denise Benoit: [denise@UUSpringfield.org](mailto:denise@UUSpringfield.org)

### **If I have a question or need assistance, who do I contact during July?**

- For pastoral matters, please contact Rev. Julie-Ann Silberman-Bunn, Assistant Minister. Rev. Julie-Ann is a trained chaplain and a skilled and caring listener. She is your primary contact for July, giving our full-time Minister, Rev. Jason Seymour, some time off for family and study leave. Rev. Julie-Ann’s email address is: [RevJulie-Ann@UUSpringfield.org](mailto:RevJulie-Ann@UUSpringfield.org)
  - We have also created a new online form - like a hotline - for engaging our shared ministry of care. Let us know what is going on with you, and we’re happy to be there in whatever way feels right. <https://uuspringfield.breezechms.com/form/carerequest>
- With questions about summer programming, or congregational activities in general, please contact Director of Congregational Life Denise Benoit\*\*: [denise@UUSpringfield.org](mailto:denise@UUSpringfield.org)
- The UUSGS Board of Trustees are the elected leaders of the congregation. They are responsible for visionary leadership and are involved with decisions regarding re-opening & public health. They always happy to hear from you\*\*: <https://uuspringfield.breezechms.com/form/ffc10b>

*\*\*Please allow some time for response, as these folks are intentionally taking some time off during July. That said, they are checking email and will be happy to respond ASAP.*

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<sup>1</sup> For more about how employers in all sectors are building in more balance, see this recent article in the *Washington Post*: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/06/28/employee-burnout-corporate-america/>

## OK... what about August? ...and September?

- **August** looks awesome! The plan for August is to re-engage in-person outside on Sunday mornings, beginning August 8th. Some services will be led by young adult members who are in seminary right now. Joe Jencks will be here in-person on the 15th - to offer his voice and to celebrate together his role on our journey this past year! Sunday mornings will be live-streamed online. (Details are still being worked out, but that's the plan for now.) Congregational leadership teams will also re-convene during August to plan for a full line-up of multi-platform (in-person & online) Fall programming.
- The plan for **September** is to begin offering Sunday worship celebrations both in-person and online. Not just live-streaming an in-person event either - not just putting a camera up at the back of the sanctuary - we're talking about a service designed for, and delivered to, an online audience. This will occur as well as a single worship experience in-person, with interesting opportunities for overlap. Timing and capacity are considerations we will work out along the way. And we'll do it all together.

## Why multi-platform? Why the hybrid approach?

- First, as a mentor once said to Rev. Jason: "you can always have your way, if you have enough ways." There is not only way to be a practicing UU. Some prefer gathering online; some prefer in-person; some prefer one format some days and another format on others. It's all good! Multi-platform simply embraces the beautiful reality of diversity in one more aspect of congregational life.
- As we emerge from the past sixteen months of necessary changes, we realize we've learned some things. We've changed. For example, one UUSGS member recently recounted setting up a memorial service for a family member. "Will there be an online option?" he was asked more than once. This wasn't a frequent question before the pandemic forced us all to adjust... but now we've seen how technology can bring us together across distances. What might it look like to envision a future that embraces the best of both in-person and online gatherings... not only for memorial services and weddings but for performances, social justice gatherings, educational events, and so on? Imagine far-away family members and friends now able to see their loved ones singing, speaking, remembering. Imagine that dialog flowing in both directions. This kind of vision is possible for us. There is no roadmap, but - as with all things - we can make the path by walking in the ways of love together.
- A hybrid approach is also about access, which is a justice issue. We aspire, in our shared ministry, to be a place that welcomes all into opportunities to celebrate and serve a love that is bigger than each of us.
- A final observation (for now): "church" isn't just about Sundays. Truthfully, it never was. But today, even that small time set aside on Sundays has been invaded by work, sports schedules, and other demands. Well before the pandemic, research showed what so many of us already know: life is busy. And many congregations that gather only on Sundays are struggling. Multi-platform programming offers opportunities to gather synchronously (i.e., at the same time) and asynchronously, which is especially useful for educational programming. Imagine a UU class or practice group that doesn't have to meet at the same time and place. Imagine a spiritual writing workshop - like Building Your Own Theology - where people can share submissions and inspiration at times during the week that work for each participant. Multi-platform won't replace any of our traditional programming... but it does have the capacity to expand access and fit into busy lives.

