

The Beacon



October 2026

Sunday Services - Begin at 10:30 and last approximately 60-75 minutes and are available both in person and via Zoom. Please see our website for the Zoom link.

October Theme: Courage

October 4 Stay Calm and Carry On

Speaker: Rev. Elaine Strawn

In what world, you might ask? World religions have long recognized the benefits of taking time to quiet our internal anxiety and listen to the wisdom within.

October 11 Monsters All Around

Facilitator's name: Kelly Armor with assistance from
Chris Brown and Kat Wolper

Monsters, by definition, are frightening. But sometimes they are protectors. Let's dig into this spooky season and consider how one person's cute is another's creepy. The service will even include a "choose your own adventure" section offering powerful discussion and hands-on exploration. This interactive service is designed to inspire and comfort all ages. *The 2nd Sunday of each month always offers something special for kids. Either the service will be interactive and family-friendly, or there will be a special art project and discussion just for kids. Potluck lunch after the service.*

October 18 Spirit of Life

Speaker: Robert Rhodes

Spirit of Life is a beloved hymn for UU congregations. Its powerful metaphors bridge the gap between religious differences and speak to our spiritual needs. Metaphoric language is based on our emotional history, mixed with rationality. We feel as we think. Caroline McDade's poem is not just a poetic expression—it is reality for those who feel the words and music. *Theme discussion at noon.*

October 25 Healthcare and Courage Sharing

Speakers: Mike Balsan and Chris Brown

Two former healthcare workers talk about their experiences summoning courage during difficult times and what they learned from those experiences. Dr. Michael Balsan will address issues concerning discussions with parents surrounding gun violence and immunizations. Chris Brown's presentation is called *Courage and Working in the Dark, a Perspective on the Unseen.*

UUerie Board of Trustees:

President: Kelly Armor

Vice President: Dixie Morrow

Secretary: Steve Sullivan

Michael Balsan

Chris Brown

Andrew Greene

Marcella Smith

Diane Guthrie, Treasurer

Mission

INSPIRE, CONNECT, ACT
We are a vibrant and inclusive religious community.

We:

*INSPIRE personal and spiritual growth;

*CONNECT in fellowship and service;

*ACT for peace and justice.

Vision

We will:

*Share the wisdom of our guiding principles and nurture all who come seeking personal and spiritual growth.

*Be a welcoming, inclusive, and expanding religious congregation with diverse ideas and beliefs reflected in our services and programs.

*Establish ourselves as a strong presence in the region through greater community engagement.

Covenant

We: *Covenant to promote a culture of compassion and acceptance in our relations with each other.

*Promise to listen with the intent to understand and to communicate in an honest and respectful manner, even when we disagree.

*Acknowledge that conflict is an opportunity for growth.



BIOGRAPHY OF OUR SPEAKER ON OCTOBER 4

Rev. Dr. Elaine Strawn served as the settled minister in the UU Fellowship of Wayne County in Wooster, OH, for 23 years before semi-retiring. She now offers Spiritual Direction to a wide variety of people, is tutored by Nature in her garden, and tries to stay grounded in these difficult times through her Tai Chi practice.

BIOGRAPHY OF OUR SPEAKER ON OCTOBER 11

Kelly Armor is currently UUerie's Board President and has been a member for over 30 years. She is a professional musician and storyteller and serves as folklorist-in-residence at Erie Arts & Culture. She is continually fascinated by the power of art and how stories and songs can yield deep meaning for the mature and delight for the young.



BIOGRAPHY OF OUR SPEAKER ON OCTOBER 18

Bob and Caroline Rhodes have been attending UU services for almost 50 years. Bob has written six books on topics ranging from organized crime and street crime, health care politics and policy, and civil liberties. His teaching career includes 3 years of high school history, two years teaching in Liberia in The Peace Corps, and 34 years as a professor in various schools, locally at Edinboro University and Allegheny College. He is particularly interested in religion and politics.

BIOGRAPHIES OF OUR SPEAKERS ON OCTOBER 25



Chris Brown has been a UU her entire adulthood. She is married to Josh Brown, and they have 3 mostly adult children (and one grandson with another due Christmas Eve) as well as 7 fur babies. Chris is also UUerie's resident baker, a former healthcare worker and a former dispatcher.

Doctor Michael Balsan is a retired Associate Professor of Pediatrics and was Chairman of Pediatrics at Magee Womens, UPMC Hamot, in Erie, PA until April of 2022. He has been an active member of the congregation at UUerie since 2017 and currently serves as a Board of Trustees member and the Chairperson of the Committee on Shared Ministry. Since his retirement in 2022, Doctor Balsan has also been active in the community as a member of the Presque Isle Rotary Club, serving as the President for 2026-2027. He has two adult children and a two-year-old grandson. He resides in Millcreek Township in Erie with his spouse of thirty years.





Welcome to Courage

Small Group Theme Discussion

Theme Discussion for Sunday, October 18 Noon--1:00 P.M.

Again this year we will be using the materials from *Soul Matters* for an Adult Education theme discussion on the third Sunday of the month, following the Sunday service and a brief coffee hour. The facilitator for the month will present a story, reading, or other introductory thought starter, followed by an opportunity for each participant to react. After everyone who wishes to speak has their chance, the discussion will open up for general participation.

Our goal with these discussions is to get to know each other better and challenge our thinking with each one of the themes. How can we better understand how our UU principles and values help us live in the world? What are those themes that speak directly to each of us? What makes a particular theme difficult for us to carry out? What would we like to concentrate on for personal improvement? What is important for our own spiritual journey?

Our circle will last for approximately one hour. No signups or preparation is required and all are welcome! See Leigh Kostis (Lwko@roadrunner.com) for any questions.

Our theme for October is **Courage**. Information on the introductory reading will be sent in the Weekend News prior to October 18. Here is both a thought and a question to set the stage. Hope to see you there!

Perhaps all the dragons in our lives are princesses who are only waiting to see us act, just once, with beauty and courage. Perhaps everything that frightens us is, in its deepest essence, something helpless that wants our love. -Rainer Maria Rilke

Question: What is the dragon in your life?



**OUR SPECIAL COLLECTION RECIPIENT FOR
OCTOBER IS THE TREVOR PROJECT**

The Trevor Project is the leading suicide prevention and crisis intervention nonprofit organization for LGBTQ+ young people. We provide information & support to LGBTQ+ young people 24/7, all year round.

[The Trevor Project - Suicide Prevention for LGBTQ+ Young People](#)

THE FILM SCREENING OF *BAD FAITH 2026: CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM IN POWER* SCHEDULED FOR TODAY, OCTOBER 1, AT 7PM AT UUERIE **HAS BEEN CANCELLED by Red Wine & Blue, the organizers of the event. We apologize for any inconvenience this causes.**

**PLEASE JOIN US ON OCTOBER 11TH FOR OUR
POTLUCK LUNCH AFTER THE SERVICE.**

Please bring a generous dish to share if you can, but there is always plenty of food, so all are welcome!

Many thanks to our potluck hosts this month: Bobbie Colt, Edie Cultu, Andrew Greene, Diane Guthrie, and Wendy Ormond.



**Mark your
Calendar**

All Committee Chairs, please plan to attend the **Council Meeting** on October 11th after potluck.

Also, there will be a **Congregational Meeting** for members on October 25th at Noon.

The Chamber Music of Claude Debussy

October 16th, 2026 7:00 PM

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie
7180 Perry Highway, Erie PA

Joan Eighmey, piano
Cody Hiller, violin
Lauren Hiller, soprano
James Pearson, cello
Andrew Rainbow, piano
Megan Rainbow, viola
Anna Rose Welch, violin

A free will offering will be accepted in support of
the Unitarian Universalist Concert Series

GREAT BLACK FRIENDS

Dear UUErie members/friends,

Last spring Steve and Mary started to worry about their Black friends. Black people were being told again and again that they are not important; they were problems. The President wanted DEI to be removed, Black history to be removed, etc.

We wanted our Black friends to know how we feel about them. We decided they deserved an African gift from us to let them know how much we respect and love them.

We sent them photos, via email, of the 12 gifts we had collected. They loved the ones they picked. Steve took almost all of the photos!

Now you are probably wondering how we invited Art Leopold into our gifts plan. After seeing the 13th Amendment film, that was shown in our congregation many years ago, Art joined our community group that read the *New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander. From then, Art and Mary did many racial justice activities together. He was Mary's first real justice teacher! We could not do gifts, without including him.

Love you all!

Mary Desmone and Steve Henry

1st Row: Paul Gambill, Ken Nickson, Art Leopold,
Abdulla Washington
2nd Row: Autumn Parker, Curis Jones, Lynn Johnson,
Kendrick Tate



3rd Row: Andre Horton, Mary and Steve, Gary Horton
4th Row: Antonio Howard, Cheryl Dix

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
Thursday, September 17, 2026 6:00pm IN PERSON

Attending: Kelly Armor, Dixie Morrow (Zoom), Christine Brown, Andrew Greene, Marcella Smith, Mike Balsan, Steve Sullivan
Absent: Diane Guthrie (Treasurer/ex officio) Visitor : Josh Brown

Check In: "nag and brag" from each member

Chalice lighting Call to Order: 6:27

Approval of August Minutes: *motioned (Mike), seconded (Steve)—approved.*

Finance Report (Kelly for Nanci Lorei): Visa credit/debit card is now in use; still in the works are other action items from the August Finance Report. Otherwise Finance is fine.

Committee Reports

Kelly: Chuck Cammarata will provide us with ministerial service for the Pastoral Care Committee; we have \$6000 or \$8000 a month available for a minister and can use some of this money to pay him. **Action Step for Kelly:** make a written MOU for his services.

Old Business

Update on prospective renter of our kitchen: no news. **Action Step for Kelly:** meet with Joanne.

Everyone should have reviewed the Board Orientation Powerpoint. Any questions? Not yet. Kelly noticed that it is out of date; Mike suggests that the Vision Statement needs to include values as well as principles. **Action Step:** Chris will enlist Josh to turn the powerpoint into a Google doc. She will then go through it and flag key concerns as we all should.

Update on Committee Descriptions. Each committee needs to approve or amend the blurb on the website and the more detailed description in the Committee Descriptions. Outstanding committees that need to renew their description are in bold.

- a. Building and Grounds (Marcella): description is good Communication, Membership, Living Worship, are good.
 - b. **Membership** (Andrew): **Action Step:** Kelly will contact Leigh for him to ask for update
 - c. **Social Justice** (Chris): minimal presence right now. She needs to get more input into their description.
 - d. Pastoral Care (Dixie): a duty of contacting congregants has been added; there has been lots of discussion of boundaries.
 - e. **Caring** (Steve): nothing from them yet. Kelly notes that their list of duties will get shorter.
 - f. Committee of Shared Ministry (Mike): it's been treading water; eventually there will be an evaluation of Bobbie as CLM. Description is complete.
 - g. **Hospitality** (Marcella): it's been difficult for Michael Long to get up a committee; maybe call it a team? He wants to do more; maybe the Little Dinners should be revived?
4. **Spiritual Exploration and Education** (Chris): an extra volunteer is needed to monitor two challenging boys on Sundays during service who must never be left alone. They are going to make sure all kids who attend more than once are registered. "Big picture" questions to brainstorm:
- a. What do we need as a board? Chris says we need to act! The answers to the next two questions give ideas in this regard.
 - b. What do we need as a congregation? Marcella notes that potlucks work well to generate conversation and adds that a dance party is promising. Chris notes that Game Days are petering out, Josh notes that there's been nothing on our YouTube channel for a year. Mike emphasizes concerts to bring in non-members, and lets us know of a classical concert that he, Janet Krack, and James Pearson have planned for October 16th at 7:00 p.m. We talk about having regularly scheduled concerts (quarterly?) with UU Erie pamphlets available for attendees. Kelly emphasizes involving our new marketing consultant Eric, and suggests that Mike create a formal committee including him, James, Janet, Nanci, and Eric.
 - c. What should our leadership be focused on? Dixie asks whether we need a direction, Kelly says yes, it's important to our future. Dixie mentions the helpful workshops and more that the UUA has been offering for congregations like ours. Chris suggests that we give a survey to and/or have a conversation with newcomers.
 - d. Mentimeter results: five handouts distributed
 - e. What are the most urgent issues?

- f. What can we most effectively address now?
- g. Should we ask more people to respond to these questions, and should we tweak them in any way?
- h. Look at the fundraisers and winnow them down.
- i. More Mentimeter questions ? Marcella suggests " would you show up for ?", Dixie "What are your strongest interests?"
- j. Mike says that the results are the same as four years ago, we still want a minister to help with leading services, doing pastoral care, RE, and engaging with community.

Kelly notes that our congregational membership decline is partly due to the lack of a minister. Til we get one, she asks, should we hire an activist for the Social Justice Committee, or sponsor one? How about an artist or writer in residence? (Andrew says that this has worked well at Temple Anshe Hesed.) Or an activist artist?

New Business:

Next board meeting date – October 15, 6:00pm In person [and on Zoom for anyone who can't make it]

Next Council meeting: October 11th after potluck BOT members are welcome.

Next congregational meeting: October 25th at noon. *Motion to adjourn: Chris. Seconded: Dixie.*

Adjourned at 8:06.



FALL INTO A LITTLE DINNER – SIGN UP TO ATTEND

Little dinners are a tradition in our congregation where a small group gathers in someone's home to share a meal and a conversation. It is a wonderful way to get to know each other better and share good food. We have four hosts who have offered their homes this fall for our little dinners. You may sign up to attend one of the dinners on sign up sheets or email me at edie_cultu@yahoo.com to let me know you would like to attend a particular dinner. The homes and dates are as follows:

October 10 – Ann Bomberger's home – one place available

October 17 – Nanci and Pat Lorei's home – three places available

October 23 – Edie and Mehmet Cultu's home – four places available

November 13 – Wendy Ormond's home – four places available



MANY THANKS TO THE ENTIRE CONGREGATION

for the wonderful gift of this redbud tree, which was given to us in memory of my brother Tony who died tragically last month.

The love and support of my UUerie family has meant the world to us at this very difficult time.

This lovely tree will bloom with beautiful purple flowers (my favorite color!), reminding us of Tony's stewardship of the natural world. This tree will be a wonderful place to pause and remember the sweet memories we have of my brother and to admire the beauty of nature that Tony loved so much.

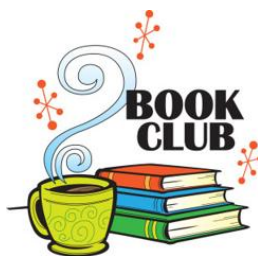
With much love to all,

Joanne

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3RD

at 9am to help weed and clean up the Memorial Garden. If anyone has some perennials that they want to get donate, bring them along. I'm going to purchase some mums to add to a couple of the top beds.

Roberta McCall
814-464-6957



UUERIE BOOK CLUB

Our next meeting will be on Wednesday, October 28th at 7:00 PM in the church library. Watch the *Weekly Flame* for the book selection.



THE ALOHA SPIRIT

UU Erie Service Auction
Saturday, November 7 5:30 - 8:30

ALOHA EVERYONE!

Put on your flip-flops and join us for fun in our UU sun under our special UU palm trees! Leave the cold weather outside and join us in our warm UU Erie home at our popular annual service auction. The aloha spirit promotes love and kindness so let's enjoy that spirit as we gather together to enjoy good food, good fellowship, and raise money for our beloved congregation!

To get us started, we need your donations of services and good treasures. Can you offer a backyard luau or a picnic on the beach? Can you teach hula dancing or offer ukulele lessons? Perhaps you can organize a nature walk on the peninsula or a visit to a nearby museum? Think of something you would enjoy and consider offering that to others. Take a look in your closets and cupboards and drawers. Do you have some nice items you hardly ever use? Can you offer that shell necklace or barbecue skewers? Can you make guava jam or a fruit salad? Someone might treasure the items you make or have set aside. Now is the time for you to make your donations.

Please fill out the donation form attached along with this message or fill out forms in the Olympia Brown room, The deadline for donations is Sunday, October 25th.

We also need workers the night of the auction. You can sign up to help in the kitchen, with the silent auction, computer work, or cleaning up. Please volunteer to help out.

Let's spread the Aloha Spirit!!

Make your donations, sign up to help, and plan to join us for a fun Hawaiian evening on November 7th!

~ Edie Cultu, Your Aloha travel guide

RECURRING EVENTS

Worship Service in person and on Zoom. Go to uuerie.org for a Zoom link. Sundays at 10:30 AM.
Sandwich preparation for the Upper Room Shelter..... First Sunday of the month after the service.
Potluck lunch.....Second Sunday of the month after the service.
Theme Discussions..... Third Sunday of the month at noon.
Buddhist Sangha.....Mondays at 7:00 PM (first Monday of the month Zoom only, in person the rest of the month).
Memory Café.....First and Third Thursdays of the month at 1:00 PM.
UUerie Book Club..... Last Wednesday of the month at 7:00 in the church library.
Narcotics Anonymous.....Wednesdays at 7 PM.
Atheist and Agnostic Community.....Fridays at 7:00 PM.
Alcoholics Anonymous.....Saturdays at 8:30 AM.
Game Day Afternoons.....Third Saturday of each month 1-4 PM.



Administrator:
Joanne Davis
admin@uuerie.org
Office Hours:
Monday—Thursday
8:30 a.m.-1 p.m.
Fridays
8:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m.

Please direct
all mail to:
7180 Perry
Highway,
Erie, PA
16509

Leave Voice
Messages
814-864-9300

We're On
The Web!
uuerie.org



Please join our Facebook page, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie! Here you can find Sunday Service announcements, upcoming events, conversations, words of inspiration and much more.

For additional information, please contact Kristin Maguire at kmaguire626@gmail.com.

October Birthdays

13 – Joanne Davis
15 – Bryan Hed
23 – Cindy Purvis
25 – Adele Crotty



We are now on Instagram. Just search for The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie.



The Beacon is published every month.
Have an announcement or event?
Submit it here
by the 15th of this month
to be included in the next issue.

Beacon Editor/Layout: Leigh Kostis and Joanne Davis.

To receive future newsletters via email link or through the mail, please register with Joanne at 814-864-9300 or admin@uuerie.org.

Remember, you must register to receive a newsletter.

Service Attendance:

September 6 – Playing with Writing – Ann Bomberger – 37 participants.

September 13 – The River that Hold Us – Water Communion– Bobbie Colt– 42 in person, 3 virtual.

September 20– Making a Way Out of No Way– Dr. Elaine Strawn – 36 in person, 3 virtual.

September 27 – Religion and the Meaning of Life – Steve Sullivan – 45 in person, 8 virtual.