

The Beacon



September 2026

Sunday Services - Begin at 10:30 and last approximately 60-75 minutes and, starting September 13th, are available both in person and via Zoom. Please see our website for the Zoom link.

September Theme: Beginnings

September 6 Playing with Writing

Speaker: Ann Bomberger

A lot of people have anxiety about writing, overfocusing on grammar and fixating on the possibility of being wrong. We will do several activities to encourage a sense of play through writing, thereby encouraging an acceptance of ourselves and one another.

September 13 Water Communion "Every Drop Has a Story"

Speaker: CL Minister Bobbie Colt

"Every Drop Has a Story" invites us into the shared ritual of Water Communion, where each offering of water symbolizes a moment, a memory, or a place that has shaped our lives. Together we weave these stories into a collective blessing, honoring the journeys that brought us here and the community that holds us as we begin a new church year. **This is the first service of the new church year available both in person and via Zoom.**

Our service today is intergenerational, so we will all participate together in the sanctuary! After service there is potluck in the Olympia Brown room. There will also be a table to the side with a craft for all kids (and kids at heart). Please see the poster at the table for step by step instructions! There will be an adult nearby to assist.

September 20 Making a Way Out of No Way

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Elaine Strawn,

The late John Lewis said we must "make a way out of no way." Though it sounds like a Buddhist koan, it has offered hope through devastating times before, as it can now, one step at a time.

September 27 Religion and the Meaning of Life

Speaker: Steve Sullivan

Steve talked about "God, Atheism, and the Meaning of Life" at our *Marketplace of the Mind* in 2013. Today he will discuss the relevance of religion, especially theistic religion, to the meaning of life. Steve is hoping for audience participation at key junctures as we consider what Steve calls the worthwhileness and higher-purpose versions of the question of the meaning of life. He can't guarantee that by the end of the sermon your lives will be more meaningful; but he thinks you will have a better idea of what people might mean when they talk about the meaning of life.

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 SEPTEMBER 6

Ann Bomberger, PhD, teaches writing and American literature at Gannon University. She teaches first-year composition, Literature and the Healing Arts, Writing With AI, and Contemporary American literature.

BIOGRAPHY OF OUR SPEAKER ON SEPTEMBER 13

Commissioned Lay Minister Bobbie Colt is a committed member of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie and is currently pursuing her Master of Divinity at Meadville Lombard Theological School, preparing for ordination as a chaplain. She is an active member of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association (UUMA) and is working toward ministerial fellowship with the UU Ministers. Barbara's call to ministry is rooted in compassion, spiritual care, and the belief that community can be a source of healing and transformation. She is grateful to serve and grow alongside this congregation.



BIOGRAPHY OF OUR SPEAKER ON SEPTEMBER 20

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 SEPTEMBER 27

Steve Sullivan has been a member of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie since 2012. He has a PhD in philosophy from Cornell University (1990). Steve taught philosophy full-time for thirty-six years at various colleges and universities until he finally collapsed into retirement a year ago after twenty-one years at PennWest Edinboro. His philosophical specialties are ethics and the philosophy of religion. Steve developed and taught an entire course around the topic of his particular interest, the meaning of life. Steve has given several guest sermons at Erie and Girard. In his copious retirement spare time, Steve visits his grandchildren, attends poetry gatherings, does some scholarly work, attempts an occasional comedy routine, serves as a trustee and as secretary of the board of Erie, and contributes to the Trump resistance movement.



Theme Discussions

Each month our Sunday services have a theme from *Soul Matters*, a sharing resource. As part of the *Soul Matters* subscription, materials are provided for small group sharing. Again this year we will be using the materials for an Adult Education program 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! Questions? Leigh Kostis (Lwko@roadrunner.com)

The themes and dates for the 2026-2027 year are as follows:

September	<i>Beginnings</i>	9/20/26
October	<i>Courage</i>	10/18/26
November	<i>Healing</i>	11/15/26
December	<i>Awe</i>	12/20/26
January	<i>Thresholds</i>	1/17/27
February	<i>Commitment</i>	2/21/27
March	<i>Balance</i>	3/21/27
April	<i>Emergence</i>	4/18/27
May	<i>Play</i>	5/16/27
June	<i>Horizons</i>	6/20/27

Welcome to Beginnings

Small Group Theme Discussion

Theme Discussion for Sunday, September 20 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 September is ***Beginnings***. Information on the introductory reading will be sent in the Weekend News prior to September 20. Here is both a thought and a question to set the stage. Hope to see you there!

John O'Donohue, the beloved Irish poet and philosopher, writes,

"Beginnings often frighten us because they seem like lonely voyages into the unknown. Yet, in truth, no beginning is empty or isolated. We seem to think that beginning is a setting out from a lonely point along some line of direction into the unknown. This is not the case. Shelter and energy come alive when a beginning is embraced... We are never as alone in our beginnings as it might seem at the time. A beginning is ultimately an invitation to open towards the gifts and growth that are stored up for us."

Question: What old story is preventing your new beginning?

FALL INTO LITTLE DINNERS! SIGN UP TO HOST!



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. The easy part is that the host provides the home and beverages, but the guests bring the food. Please sign up to host a little dinner this fall. You may choose the date and how many people you could entertain in your home. You may contact Edie Cultu if you are willing to host at edie_cultu@yahoo.com. Please let me know if you have steps to your door and if you have any pets. Thank you for helping to continue this tradition.

~Edie Cultu



SAVE THE DATE!! THE ALOHA SPIRIT! UU SERVICE AUCTION SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7 5:30 - 8:30

Please bring your joyful Aloha spirit to our annual service auction on Saturday, November 7th. It is time to think about what you could offer to the auction. Perhaps it is a service like a backyard luau or a roast pork dinner.

Maybe you will don your flip flops and wash someone's car or their backyard lanai. You might offer to play your ukulele or guitar at a birthday party or teach hula lessons. You can also offer items such as beach glass jewelry or wooden bowls.

Please be thinking of what you can offer for our auction.

SAVE THE DATE! NOVEMBER 7TH!



CORN ROAST CELEBRATION

On Sunday, August 23, members and friends of the congregation continued the tradition of the summer corn roast. Held at a shelter on Presque Isle, Bobbi Colt lead a service with music by Pat Lorei, readings by Josh Brown and Ann Bomberger, and a brief history of the 45 year old celebration by Janet Krack. We sand a happy birthday to Howard Krack, who has been roasting corn for decades on his specially designed and fabricated corn roaster.

Despite the cool and very windy weather, we enjoyed a delicious potluck, roasted corn, and good conversations. A special thank you to those who helped make this day possible:

Janet and Howard Krack, Pat and Nanci Lorei, Andrew Greene, Dan Crotty, and Kat Wolper. If you weren't able to be at the Corn Roast this year, we hope to see you in 2027!

Submitted by Leigh Kostis



On the next page you will find the remarks presented by Josh Brown before the corn roast celebration:

We gather today around something wonderfully ordinary: ears of corn, shared tables, and the company of one another.

There is something sacred in such simplicity.

A single ear of corn begins with a seed small enough to rest unnoticed in the palm of a hand. It is placed into dark soil, where—without applause or certainty—it begins the quiet work of becoming. It depends upon rain, sunlight, fertile earth, and the care of those who tend the field. It grows not alone, but among countless other stalks, each one reaching upward and each one rooted in the same ground.

Perhaps this is also how a community grows.

We arrive carrying small seeds of possibility: a kind word, a new idea, a willingness to listen, an offer of help. At first, these things may seem insignificant. We may never know exactly what they will become. Yet when they are planted in a community and tended with patience, they may grow into trust, friendship, justice, healing, and hope.

No harvest is the accomplishment of one person alone.

The food before us carries a long story. It holds the work of those who planted and tended it, those who harvested and transported it, those who prepared the fire and set the tables, and those who made room in their lives to be present today. It carries the gifts of soil and sun, wind and water—gifts no human being created, but upon which every human life depends.

Our gathering carries a story too.

As we come together for UUerie's 45th Corn Roast, each person here has brought something that cannot be replaced. Some have brought laughter. Some have brought memories. Some have brought energy and enthusiasm. Some may have arrived tired, uncertain, or carrying burdens that cannot be seen. All of us have brought our full humanity, and all of us belong at this table.

In our Unitarian Universalist tradition, we affirm that we are connected—not only to the people we know and love, but to people we may never meet, to generations who came before us, to generations still to come, and to the living world that sustains us.

A corn roast may seem like a small event in a complicated world. But gathering together is not insignificant. Sharing food is not insignificant. Creating a place where people can experience welcome, joy, and belonging is not insignificant.

Each time we choose community over isolation, generosity over scarcity, and curiosity over judgment, we help cultivate the world we hope to see.

May we remember that growth takes time.

May we offer one another both sunlight and shelter.

May we give thanks for the hands, human and possibly more-than-human, that have made this meal possible.

May we notice the sacred abundance present in ordinary moments.

And when the gathering is finished, may we carry something of this warmth with us.

May we leave ready to plant seeds of kindness wherever we go.

May we tend them with courage.

May we trust that even the smallest acts of care can become part of a larger harvest.

Today, let us eat with gratitude, laugh freely, welcome generously, and celebrate the truth that life is richer when it is shared.

-- Josh Brown

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, August 13, 2026, 4:00pm, MOSTLY IN PERSON

Attending : Kelly Armor, Dixie Morrow, Christine Brown, Andrew Greene, Marcella Smith, Mike

Balsan, Steve Sullivan, plus Andrew Greene via Zoom

Absent: Diane Guthrie

Check In, chalice lighting, call to order

Approval of July Minutes (moved by Christine, seconded by Dixie)

Finance Report

- Edward Jones numbers not updated for the month, but we're doing okay (see the Committee Reports link below for more details from Nanci Lorei).
- Still working on implementation of Google Pay for Realm
- Erie Gives - \$66,005 (preliminary number) - last year was \$75,845 (but \$10,550 was for the roof/solar) – does not include Bonus Bucks
- A Visa card for use by the Caring Committee is proving more complicated than expected. One option is to open an account with KlerCard but Kelly is not finished researching. She will be in touch when ready to present options.
- Application for tax refund for solar keeps getting delayed, hopefully started soon.

Committee Reports: there are only a few reports this month as most have not been active this summer.

Building and Grounds report from Pat Lorei, with emphasis on water heater

Pat explained to us the need to replace our “old but not dead” hot-water tank. It should be done soon, but needn't be immediate; the consensus, he said, is to switch to electric. The three unit options are standard tank, tankless, and hybrid water tank; the three possible sellers are Jackson, Pilewski, and Carlin. There was much discussion of the options; Pat himself said he was leaning toward a hybrid heat pump from Jackson (which offers the longest warranty and the lowest cost). We reached no definite conclusion. Pat made two other points. First, ceiling waterproofing to stop leaks has been completed. Second, heat tape on downspouts had not yet been done. Kelly also noted that we have hired a new cleaning crew of three experienced and reliable janitors.

Old Business

Update on prospective renter of our kitchen: Joanne Davis will meet with her on 8/15 and show her the space.

Questions and edit suggestions for BoT Responsibilities and Duties (which Kelly revises during the meeting). Our main attention is to her presidential duty of writing a monthly column for the *Beacon*; we discussed whether the column is needed and if so whether it should remain monthly. We pay some attention to whether all of the secretarial duties listed are necessary, especially one already covered by other people. Steve will do some research on some of them—for instance, whether Joanne keeps a folder of approved minutes.

Come up with a plan to update committee descriptions and assign committee liaisons. Here are the liaisons.

- Kelly: both Communication and Finance.
- Christine: both Social Justice and Spiritual Exploration and Education.
- Dixie: both Living Worship and Pastoral Care.
- Marcella: both Hospitality and Building and Grounds.
- Mike: both Shared Ministry and the Search Committee.
- Andrew: both the Memorial Garden and Membership.
- Steve: the Caring Committee.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MINUTES CONTINUED

Kelly notes that there are actually two descriptions for each committee: a brief one on the website homepage and a better one given in the link just above. Action Step: Each Board Member will send both descriptions to their committee(s) to compare and then approve or amend.

Dixie's overview of the classes the UUA offers for BOT members in congregations nationwide: she notes that she emailed us an overview after the July meeting, recommends courses 105 and 260, and says she'll look at others. We decide against expecting every trustee to take any specific course individually; group attendance, if possible, might make more sense.

We postponed the review of Mentimeter results ([Link to Mentimeter results of Congregational Meeting](#)) to our September meeting. Here are the relevant questions to consider:

- a. What are the most urgent issues?
- b. What can we most effectively address now?
- c. Should we ask more people to respond to these questions, and should we tweak them in any way?
- d. Look at the fundraisers and winnow them down

New Business:

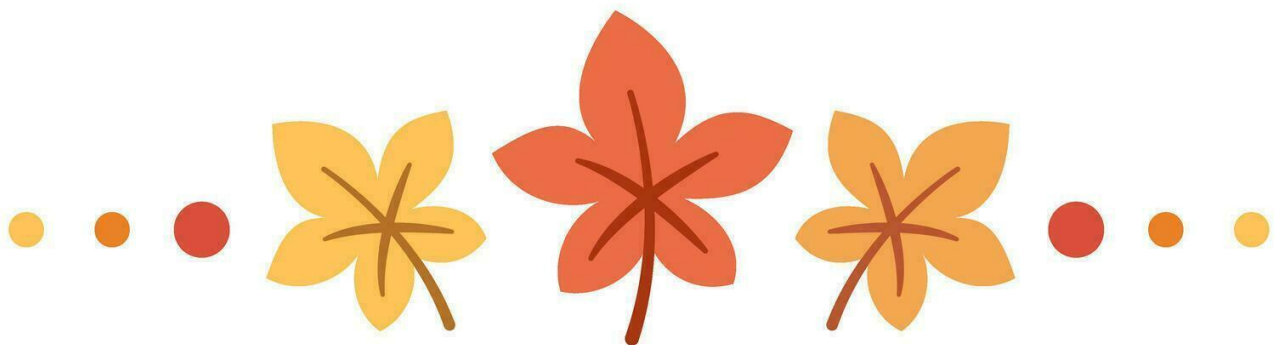
Plaque for Terry Kime: Bobbie Colt's idea; we discussed some details about the plaque, Action Step: Kelly will contact Bobbie with our suggestions.

Woven Faith Curriculum from the Unitarian Universalist Association for congregations with no minister. Steve voices concerns about the likely curricular use of the UUA's Article II Revisions, which are centered on six values rather than on the Seven Principles and which entirely omit the Sources of Unitarian Universalism. The July minutes have a link for information on the "orientation" that the UUA has in mind. Kelly notes that each of us is free to examine and critique the curricula.

Next board meeting date: September 17, 6:00pm In person.

Motion to adjourn (from Kelly, seconded by Steve) is approved.

Steve forgets to record the time, but guesses 6:45 p.m.





OUR SPECIAL COLLECTION RECIPIENT FOR SEPTEMBER IS COMMUNITY SHELTER SERVICES

Community Shelter Services rebuilds lives by providing refuge and pathways to stability for adults experiencing homelessness and poverty. Every day of the year, we enable individuals to meet their basic needs for food, clothing and shelter. We transform lives using a holistic approach to understanding and addressing behavioral health, housing and employment needs. We commit ourselves to helping those we serve achieve renewed lives of dignity and self-determination.



FALL 2026 HIGHWAY TRASH REMOVAL PROJECT

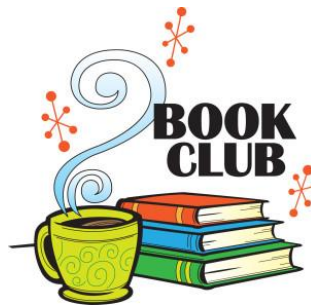
Our next highway trash pick up project for 2026 is scheduled for Saturday, September 19th, at 10:00 AM. Hopefully the weather will be cooperative. As always, we will concentrate on Perry Highway from top of the hill crest (south) north to the intersection where Perry Highway and Old French Road meet. If we have enough people we will continue north on Old French Road to Arbuckle (about 0.5 mile) and Arbuckle to East Gore (about another 0.5 mile).

Also, PENNDOT recommends that all participants view their safety awareness video. [Here's the link](#). Disposable safety vests (they ARE flimsy, so bring your own if you have a better one), gloves, pick-up devices (again, if you have your own you are welcome to bring them), bags are provided. Maybe donuts as well.

EXCITING NEWS FROM SEEC -- THE SPIRITUAL EXPLORATION AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Starting in September the 2nd Sunday of each month will be kid and family friendly! Either there will be a special hands-on activity in the classroom that helps teach about UUism during the service, or the service will be completely intergenerational -- both fun for kids and meaningful for adults. And, of course, after the service, all are welcome to stay for our fabulous potluck lunch. Every Sunday we still offer nursery care for infants and pre-schoolers.

Sunday, September 13 is our Ingathering and Water Communion Service. All will start in the sanctuary, and after the Water Communion ritual, children will go to the classroom to explore a water-based art activity while adults stay in the sanctuary.



UUERIE BOOK CLUB

We took a break for the month of August. Our next meeting will be on Wednesday, September 30 at 7:00 PM in the church library. We'll be discussing *Simply More* by Cynthia Erivo, the star of *Wicked*.

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.

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Leave Voice
Messages
814-864-9300

We're On
The Web!
uuerie.org

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.

Weekly Flame

Every Thursday an update
of UUErie events and news
for the week is sent out via
email. If you would like to
be included on the UUErie
email mailing list, please
contact admin@uuerie.org
before 9:30 a.m.
Wednesdays.

September Birthdays

03 – Jane Mallory
03 – Michele Rupp
05 – Linda Burfield
14 – Bobbie Colt
18 – Lisa Nathanson
21 – Bob Rhodes
24 – Liz Yount
25 – Barb Brennan
27 – Alice Beavers
29 – Lynne Brown

Service Attendance:

**August 2 – The Tree of Yoga – Denny Fiscus – 31
participants.**
**August 9 – The Art of Improvisation – Kelly Armor and Pat
Lorei – 27 participants.**
**August 16 – Mystical Massage – Michele Paich – 25
participants.**
August 23 – Annual Corn Roast – 35 in attendance.
**August 30 – CLM Bobbie Colt and Dixie Morrow – UU
Principles and Values – 36 participants.**



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.



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

