

# Introduction to Our Congregation and Some Notes on Joining Our Worship Services Using Zoom

## First Universalist Society of Hartland

### Who We Are

Welcome! The First Universalist Society of Hartland (FUSH), founded in 1802, is a friendly and energetic Unitarian Universalist congregational community.

We are a historic faith tradition built on the Unitarian values of freedom, reason, and tolerance, and the Universalist values of faith, hope, and love. Like our forebears in this community and beyond, we honor both depth and diversity of faith.

We are people from many paths of life, who hold many different views and beliefs. We have no creed or test of faith, and we welcome people who hold a variety of theological orientations.

Many of us identify with a religious affiliation including Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, and Earth-Centered traditions. Others of us consider ourselves agnostic, humanist, or atheist. Still others of us identify simply as mystics, or as spiritual, or seeking, or “hopeful but unsure.” Together we are Unitarian Universalists, committed to a free faith, engaging with our spirits and our world, and working to build the beloved community as best we can, here in *this* life.

Our mission is to build connections, to search for truth and meaning, to strengthen community, and to bring inspiration and healing to each other—in our congregation, our region, and the wider world.

You can learn more about our congregation on our website: [www.hartlanduu.org](http://www.hartlanduu.org). There you can find an archive of our monthly newsletters and details about some of our programs and practices. You can also follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/hartlanduu/>, or speak with any of our members or staff.

### Our Worship

A great deal of our liturgy and other practices of worship will feel familiar to many who have experience with contemporary Protestant traditions. We tend to use a broader definition of “scripture” than many other traditions, however, and only infrequently use texts from the Christian or Hebrew Bibles.

Our inspirational readings are poetry and prose from sources ancient and new and in-between.

We sing hymns and songs—some old favorites and some that may be new to you if you are not familiar with Unitarian Universalist traditions.

We tell stories.

We take time for prayer and meditation in words, silence, and song.

We usually have a sermon, homily, or reflection from our minister or a guest speaker or two.

We celebrate beauty, and life, and hope, and find ways to share inspiration from our own lives, as well as from traditional or established sources of wisdom and faith.

*Here are some details about our worship services that will be helpful to know, particularly if you are new to Unitarian Universalism:*

**Chalice lighting:** The flaming chalice is a symbol of our faith, and when we gather for worship, we light a chalice, usually with words chosen for the day, included in the printed worship materials, and spoken in unison. At the end of the service we also extinguish the chalice with traditional words. The light of the chalice shines for many different things for different people, and through it all it shines for the light of love that we consider “the doctrine of our congregation.” During our Zoom worships, after the worship leader lights the congregation’s chalice, we’ll invite you to share in the chat area where you are lighting the chalice. You may choose to light a chalice or candle of your own as you do so, or just to light a “flame of the spirit.”

**Joys and Sorrows:** Early in our service, in a time for all ages, we welcome anyone present to lift up any joys or sorrows from their own life. If you choose to share, we ask that you share briefly, that you are sharing your own joys and sorrows, and not sharing for others without their express permission, and that you refrain from extensive details about injuries and illnesses. It’s also important to know that this is a prayerful time, for real joys and sorrows—and not time for announcements, or for extensive expression of opinions, or complaints.

If you are participating via Zoom, you will be invited to type your message into the chat area, and the service leader will speak it out. If you are on Zoom using a telephone connection, you can send the message in advance, or wait for the leader to ask if there are messages via telephone.

**Prayer cycle:** Most often, during our prayer time, we will have a brief spoken prayer from the service leader, a time for silence (usually a minute to 90 seconds) and then we will sing a song from our tradition, “Spirit of Life”

**Reflection time:** In our all-Zoom worship services, there will usually be some time during the service when the leader asks you to contemplate a question, or an idea, and may ask you to respond, after a time, using the chat function.

**Unison Affirmation/Congregational Commission:** We have some standard words that we include in almost all worship services as spoken in unison. If you are connecting via Zoom using a video connection, the words will be available to you in some form and the worship leader will direct you to them. You are welcome to speak the words, or just to listen.

**Hymns/Songs:** We will share some of our usual hymns in Zoom worship, and we will also likely share some new songs from various sources. Accompaniment for most of our hymns will be pre-recorded and played on the piano by our longstanding music director, Patty Talbot. The words will be available in some form, and the worship leader will direct you to them. You are welcome to sing along, or just to listen. In most cases we will sing the hymn with our microphones muted, and all of us listening to the accompaniment. The worship leader will explain if we’re singing anything differently.

**Collection:** We work hard to support the financial needs of our congregation through the regular donations of our members and friends, and we encourage you to join in supporting the congregation in any way that’s appropriate for you. In our in-person worship, we devote our collection each week in its entirety to supporting a non-profit organization that’s doing good work in our region or wider world. In our worship via Zoom, we’ll be exploring different ways to support organizations in our midst that are still very much in need, though we are not meeting in person. The worship leader will give suggestions for your support, and will explain mechanisms for doing so as we develop them.

## Connecting via Zoom

We gather for worship at 10:00 am on Sunday mornings. Our Zoom meeting space is available beginning at 9:30 to allow you time to work out any technological glitches or connection issues you may have. We'll try to start the service precisely at 10:00 am.

**Zoom User Names:** We ask that you set your Zoom user name to be your own name, or your family name, or some other recognizable identifying information. A first name and last initial is usually fine. If you'd rather not use your name publicly in this way, just send a message to our minister, Paul Sawyer, letting him know you'll be there and what name you'll be using (his connection information is listed below). Our worship is open to everyone, but especially in these times of disconnection, we seek to create a space of intentional and easy connection. You will never be put on the spot, or asked to speak or type anything if you do not want to.

**Audio:** By default you will enter our Zoom space with your microphone muted, and we will ask you to keep yourself muted for most of the service. With the number of people we have connecting, stray noises, ringing telephones, barking dogs, and such, can add up to significant distractions. The worship leader may on occasion mute everybody, just to be sure. You'll usually be able to un-mute yourself if needed, and can if you're unable to do so, you can click "raise your hand" or send a message to the chat asking to be un-muted.

**Video:** By default you will enter our space with your video feed turned off. You are welcome to keep your video feed off, or to turn it on if you prefer. It's one of the benefits of this style of worship that, if you need to pace a bit, if you want to get some more coffee, if you want to stay in your pajamas for worship—you're welcome to! If you are attending and not using a recognizable user name, and have your video off, the worship leader or assistant may send a private chat message asking who you are—just to check in.

**Sacred Space:** We are inviting everyone attending our Zoom worship to consider creating some sacred space wherever you are—you may want to have a candle or chalice to light, a special altar area, or cloth, or anything that feels right for you.

**The Chat Function:** If you are joining Zoom using a computer, smartphone, or tablet, you will find at the bottom of your screen a button that says "Chat" (the menu buttons in Zoom may be hidden on your device until you hover your mouse or, on a touchscreen, touch, toward the bottom of the Zoom window/screen).

We will use the chat function to collect Chalice Lighting Locations, Joys and Sorrows, and for other interactions during the service. You can send your chat text to "everyone" which will usually be the correct choice, or only to the host, or another participant.

**Connection Issues:** if you're finding that your video or audio feed is cutting out, or looking strange, you may have a slow internet connection on your end. It's also possible that our connection at the sending source will have some slow moments, but we have dedicated fiber-optic connections to the church and office buildings, so we should usually have the bandwidth to handle the needs of our worship time.

If you are having connection issues, here are a few things you can try that may help:

- Turn off the video feed from your camera.
- If you are using Wi-fi, bring your device closer to your wi-fi router. If you are using a cellular network connection, try moving around the space where you are, to see if the signal improves.
- If you are on a shared network, ask others in your home to stop using internet-intensive applications like games or videos, turn off your TV box if you are a Vtel TV customer.
- If you are using Wi-fi, consider using a wired ethernet line connected to your router (you may need to purchase a cable and perhaps an adapter for your device).

**“Virtual Coffee Hour”:** If you’re interested, at the close of the service, the worship leader may invite you to join in smaller groups for a time of conversation. There is a function of Zoom meetings that allows for this kind of interaction. If you’re interested, you’ll be randomly sent to a small group and you’ll be welcome to stay and chat, and you’re always welcome to leave the meeting any time you like.

**Making the connection:** We gather for worship on Sunday mornings at 10:00 am, Eastern Time. The Zoom space will be available beginning at 9:30 am.

- Our Zoom meeting ID for worship should always be: **531-595-9911**
- If you are using a computer, smartphone, or tablet, you should be able to access our gathering by clicking this link: <https://zoom.us/j/5315959911>
- You can connect by telephone by calling **646-558-8656** and then following the instructions to enter the meeting ID listed above. You do not need to enter a user number, and if prompted to do so, you can ignore it, and you should be connected soon.

### **Learning More:**

You can sign up to be on the list to receive our weekly congregational e-mail messages, monthly newsletter, and other messages, by sending an e-mail to [calendar@hartlanduu.org](mailto:calendar@hartlanduu.org) with your e-mail address, name, and contact information.

If you have questions about our worship, our community, or connecting via Zoom, you can contact our minister, the Rev. Paul Sawyer at [uupaul@gmail.com](mailto:uupaul@gmail.com). Paul serves the congregation 80%-time, and he may not see his e-mail every day, especially during the current COVID-19 crisis, but provided he is working and able to be in his office, he will get your message and will reply when he can.