

# Powerline

*First Unitarian Universalist  
Church of Niagara*

**June 2024**

639 Main Street  
Niagara Falls, NY 14301  
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*Learn, Love, Build a Better World*

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The Powerline is a monthly publication of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Niagara. It is free online to anyone who wishes to subscribe- members, friends, and anyone else anywhere in the country and beyond.

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Many thanks to our contributors Glen Herman, Teresa Labuszewski, Pam Smith, Patty Lisk, and Erica Kopp.

## **Sunday Services**

### **June 2:** "Do our Covenants of Right Relations really matter?"

We are reminded often that we Unitarian-Universalists are bound together via Covenant. What exactly is a Covenant? Is it a tool for expansion & growth or a rhetorical waste of time? Our speaker will reflect upon these questions and more as we look for the deeper meanings together.

*Speaker: Ron Skowronski*

*Coffee Hours: Ron Skowronski*

*Usher: Diane McNamera*

### **June 9:** "A Whale of a Tale"

A fish tale gets bigger and better every time you tell it. We'll be looking at some big fish stories from religions and mythologies, and wondering what the fish think when they see us swimming in the lake.

#### **Adult Education Class, June 9, 12:30 - 1:30**

*Speaker: John Snodgrass*

*Coffee Hour: Kathy McCunn and Wally Lamb*

*Usher: Diane McNamera*

### **June 16:** "Do Not Give Up on Love"

June 16 will be a special sermon featuring Patricia Calback singing "Orpheus" by Sara Barielles. Donna will fill in as to how the lyrics talk about connections to our own "solid ground," which can come from any of our strong connections -- our fathers, other family members and friends, and our church.

*Speaker: Donna Evan-Deyermond*

*Coffee Hour: Board*

*Usher: Diane McNamera*

### **June 23 our summer programs begin**

## President's Report

### Upcoming Events

- **Christian Peace Collective of WNY Luncheon:** We are excited to announce an informal luncheon for clergy on June 4th. This event will be a wonderful opportunity to foster community and collaboration among our local Christian clergy members.
- **Special Dish by Ron Skoronski:** Don't miss out on June 2nd when Ron Skoronski will be bringing in his famous Polish hot dish. We look forward to enjoying it together.

### Board Updates

- **Welcome, Bill!** I am delighted to recognize and welcome Bill, our newest addition to the Board. Bill has been instrumental in maintaining our building and has played a crucial role in integrating new technology, including setting up Zoom for our meetings. His dedication and hard work are greatly appreciated.

### Recent Activities

- **Annual Congregation Meeting Success:** Our recent congregational meeting went smoothly, and I am pleased to report that the budget was passed. Additionally, we have successfully updated our by-laws, ensuring they are in line with our current and future needs.
- **Spring Clean-Up:** On May 4th, a group of our dedicated members participated in our annual spring clean-up. Their efforts have made a significant difference, and the grounds look fantastic.

### Looking Ahead

As we approach the summer, we encourage all members to sign up to host a summer program. Your participation and support are vital to the success.

Thank you all for your continued dedication and hard work. Together, we are making a positive impact in our community.

Warm regards,

Erica

## Niagara Falls Beautification Commission's Clean Up

On May 4, a group of FUUN members participated in the Niagara Falls Beautification Commission's spring clean-up project. The weather was perfect, partly cloudy and not too hot or too cold.

We split into two groups. One scoured several blocks around our church, picking up trash. The other weeded and mulched the landscaping and edged the sidewalks in front of our church. The mulching will be an ongoing project this spring and summer. (Bags of mulch are stored on our grounds for anyone who would like to help!)

## Science News by Glen Herman

Say What?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is in the news frequently these days, as it finds more applications and becomes more widespread. Computers that can learn, make decisions and predictions are already: investing in the stock market, making medical diagnosis and treatment recommendations, and driving cars and trucks.

It's a mixed bag, not entirely a good thing, and can raise ethical issues.

But one really interesting application is to use AI to analyze animal communications. Some questions are:

1. Are animals that vocalize actually speaking a language, or are they making alert sounds, or just singing for the fun of it?
2. If it is a spoken language that conveys information, can we decipher it?
3. Can we talk back?

One recent example that was reported in the New York Times earlier in May is a study (ongoing since 2020) of the complex clicking made by sperm whales. To date, the study has identified 156 "words". It is still to be determined if the whales combine these words into sentences or use them to compose music.

And the BBC reported on another group studying the songs of humpback whales. In 2021 the group encountered a humpback whale off the coast of Alaska. Using an underwater speaker they played a recording of a humpback greeting call, which led to a 20 minute long "conversation " with the whale as it circled the boat.

And there are other groups using AI to decipher and speak dolphin.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20240409-the-scientists-learning-to-speak-whale>

## Gardening by Teresa Labuszewski

I love spring and early summer in the garden, seeing my old perennial friends return like snowbirds from Florida. But even more, I love the surprises-plants and animals that appear out of nowhere. And I love the origins of common names for them.

This year, a Pagoda lily (*Erythronium pagoda*) appeared in my periwinkle. I did not plant it. To grow from seed, which I presume it must have, is a minor miracle. One usually plants a corm (sort of a bulb but not really), not a seed to get this plant. Some bird or other creature had to have eaten a seed from the flower, the seed had to survive digestion and get pooped out in just the right spot to grow. It is called a Pagoda lily because the flower's shape resembles the curved roof of a Japanese pagoda.



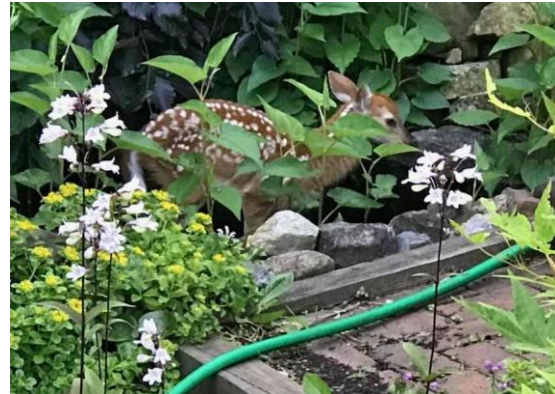
As I was mourning the loss of an evergreen I had to remove because it threatened to topple into the street, I found this Jack-in-the-Pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*) that had been hidden. Again, I did not put it there. This was most likely planted by a bird or other animal who ate the red berries that the Jack and pulpit become in the fall. The leaves are clustered in threes (so not every leaves of three need to be let be), that hide the pulpit in which "Jack" sits. I guess someone was reminded of a minister in his pulpit.



Then last week, while supporting my White Dragon Knotweed (Koenigia), I found this little guy. I presume he or she is a green tree frog. (If you look closely, the frog is just to the right of one of the big stalks.) I could not find out how this plant got its name. Some species of knotweed are quite invasive-this one is not.



And this little guy appeared in the garden one evening two years ago. Aw, so cute. He curled up under a bush and spent the night.



## June 2024 Local Happenings:

Rabies Clinic June 1 – Hyde Park Pavilion 716- 439- 7511 9AM – 12PM

Stone House in Lewiston – live music every Friday and Saturday 7 PM

Confetti Cottage Fashion Show June 2, Noon – 2PM at the Tatler 716-282-6232

Women in Red Art Show and Basket Auction June 3, 5PM at the Tatler 716-282-6232

### Art Park

June 18 Sarah McLachlan

June 21 Bonnie Raitt

June 22 Tronbone Shorty

June 28 Dispatch

### Niagara Falls Train Station

June 1 & 2 Bike a Polooza

Jazz at Richardson June 23

### BPO/ Kleinhans

June 1 & 2 Mahler's Resurrection

June 4 John Haitt

June 8 Symphony of Illusions

June 13 Rhythm and Brews

June 26 Haley Reinhart

Allentown Art Festival June 8 & 9

### Riviera

June 1 & 2 Kim Mitchell

June 8 Gilmore Project

June 13 Reverend Horton Heat

June 20 Trans-Canada Highway Men

June 21 – 23 The Musical Box

### Castellani Art Museum

Life and Art of Polly King

### Old Falls Street Concerts

June 28 45 RPM British Invasion

5PM - 10 PM

### Shea's Smith Theatre

June 21 & 23 Three Decembers

### Outer Harbor

June 8 Hardy with Kip Moore,

Travis Denning

June 14 Brothers Osborne

June 15 Lil Yachty

June 16 A Day to Remember

### Canalside

June 2 PRIDE Festival 1 – 7PM

## UUA

### Totes Queer

By [Paige Getty](#)

May 29, 2024

... queer

as in  
always becoming;

as in  
less “this or that”  
and more “multilayered, multidimensional, and complex.”

as in  
intimately experienced,  
and beyond definition...

—M Jade Kaiser, enfleshed

At Capital Pride last year, a vendor was selling tote bags with simple, bold declarations:

Totes Lez. Totes Ace. Totes Pan. Totes Trans. Totes Bi.

And—the favorite of my 13-year-old offspring and me—  
Totes Queer. She purchased that one, and it’s now proudly  
displayed in her space in our home.

More recently I mentioned to Beth, a newish acquaintance,  
that our older child was traveling to visit her girlfriend. Beth,  
herself a lesbian, expressed surprise. “Did I know that?” she  
asked.

“Probably not,” I said. “In our family, a lesbian relationship is  
unremarkable. We’re very queer.”

But here’s the thing: we don’t look it—not from the outside. On the surface or from a distance, we’re  
indistinguishable from the stereotypical White suburban family composed of a Mom, Dad (both  
cisgender), two kids, dog, and corn snake.

I’m in my early 50s and have been out since my mid 20s, having first claimed the label bisexual,  
though pansexual or queer fits better now. I’ve only ever had two serious romantic relationships—  
the first was with a woman, and I’m married to the second, who would tell you himself that he also  
is “not straight.” I am uninterested in romantic or sexual relationships with anyone other than my  
spouse; and also, if something were to take him from me, I fully expect that I’d want another  
romantic relationship. I cannot anticipate the gender of that imagined potential future partner. After  
all, my attention is captured by all sorts of attractive people whose gender I might eventually  
register.





My queerness, though, is about more than who I'm actively involved with, romantically or sexually. And it's about more than what's visible on the surface. It's about mindset and attitude and intention. It's experienced in the private world of imagination and fantasy, as well in the lived experience of relationship. It's in the rejection of WASPy gender norms and in the deliberate choice not to assume or pressure a particular form of romantic relationship in the lives of the children I'm privileged to raise.

And it's in the celebration of my own first serious romantic relationship—not as part of a life left behind in the past, but as an integral part of who I am now, spiritually, sexually, humanly whole. And totes queer.

Prayer

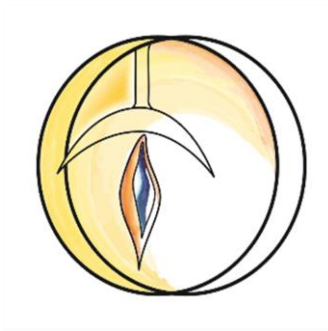
Holy Mystery—embodiment of love more expansive and queer than we can imagine—may we live lives of integrity. Always becoming. Whole and true and beloved.

*Editor's note: Rev. Paige's children and spouse all gave their blessing to be included in this reflection.*



**[Paige Getty](#)** (she/her) is a Unitarian Universalist minister who served the UU Congregation of Columbia, Maryland, from 2003 to 2024.

<https://www.uua.org/braverwiser/totes-queer>



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June 2024

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