

March 2022

Uniter



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF SILVER SPRING
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WORSHIP SERVICES

In-Person Worship Resumes!

COVID rates have subsided in our area, and we are excited to welcome the congregation back at 40% capacity in the sanctuary for worship on Sunday mornings, beginning on Sunday, February 27! Worship will continue to be offered virtually as well, though the transition to live worship in the Sanctuary means services will again be streamed via Zoom rather than YouTube. Please see upcoming all-church emails for service links and more details.

Beginning on Sunday, March 6, Religious Education will resume in-person classes on the 1st and 3rd Sundays. Children will begin 1st and 3rd Sundays in the Sanctuary for the first third of worship after which they will be sent to their classrooms. It will be so wonderful to be together in worship as a multigenerational community again!

While we will not be offering childcare until children under 5 can be vaccinated, families with young children are always welcome in the Sanctuary. We will be adding some rocking chairs and a small play area in the Sanctuary for grown-ups and young children who may need more freedom of movement. We have also recently installed a flatscreen TV in the Dolan Lounge (in the Administrative Building) where grown-ups with young children who wish to be on campus but in a space with fewer people can watch the service.

March 6: Rekindling the Light Rev. Patricia Guthmann Haresch

There is an old "preaching illustration" about a Lighthouse Preservation Society. With all that is going on in the world and our own lives these days, may the story remind us of how we might rekindle our own light and the light of others to restore ourselves and reach out beyond our own circles.

Rev. Haresch is a birthright UU. She had served congregations in the Northeast and Southeast until her spouse joined the U.S. State Department, bringing their family to the Philippines, Colombia, and Canada. In the Philippines, she enjoyed being an active ministerial volunteer with a UU congregation in metro Manila and the national denomination. In Canada, she was the Developmental Minister for the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa. Rev. Pat and her family have settled again in Metro DC.

March 13: All In: Together! Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt (Daylight Savings Time Starts Today)

This week we kick off our Annual Budget Drive and celebrate the power of our generosity! In this service we give thanks for the many gifts people give and receive as part of this beloved community.

March 20: The Limits of Reason Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

Reason is an important part of liberal faith but it alone is not enough. Join us this Sunday for a service about the many building blocks for strong, liberal faith.

March 27: Renewing Faith Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

Those who have lost faith, whether in a person, in the future, or in a belief system know the pain it can bring. And a place of pain is no place to say. This week we consider how to find and renew faith, even if it's in something different than it was before.

INSPIRE

Minister's Column by Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt



Unitarian Universalism isn't generally known as a religion heavy on miracles, but we do happen to have a miracle of our own, and it's a good one!

John Murray was an 18th century English Universalist who experienced tragedy in his young adult life when his wife and baby boy became sick and died. Soon after that he lost his job, ran out of money, and even went to debtor's prison. Eager for a new start, John boarded a ship for New York. But the weather turned bad toward the end of his trip, and the ship ran aground in New Jersey. When John went in search of help for his fellow passengers, he spotted a farmhouse beside a small church.

As it turned out, Thomas had built the little church John had spotted. Thomas told him, "I built this little church for God, and I've been waiting for God to send me a minister. I have waited for a long time, but now God has called you across the sea, John, to be that minister." Though John wasn't interested, Thomas implored him to preach that Sunday. Finally, John gave in and promised that if the weather didn't improve and allow the boat to finish its journey to New York, he would preach. Lo and behold, on the morning of Sunday, September 30, 1770, no wind blew, and in the little church Thomas Potter had built John Murray preached the first ever Universalist sermon in the Americas. That chance encounter ultimately led John to become the father of American Universalism.

I'm not one to assume that just because something happens means it was meant to happen or that it was inevitable. I don't think the pandemic was meant to happen, nor do I think John Murray's encounter with Thomas Potter was somehow divinely orchestrated. But like John Murray, our world has been through a time of loss, trauma, and transition. And like John Murray, the choices we make next will impact generations to come.

Our worship theme for the month of March is "renewing faith." As the Omicron variant subsides and we return to more in-person activities and the wheel turns from winter to spring, many of us find ourselves turning to the future with a renewed sense of faith in what's possible. Our Annual Budget Drive will also begin this month, giving us all the chance to turn some goals UUCSS has had for a long time into reality. Like John Murray, may we engage the days ahead with a willingness to use our gifts where they are needed. Like John Murray, as we share our gifts may we contribute to a common good that blesses not only ourselves, but generations to come.

Message From Maggie Hayes, Board President



The month of March brings with it the second anniversary of the original Covid lockdown, the kick-off of our Annual Budget Drive, the first day of Spring, and the worship theme of “Renewing Faith.” Now, if ours were a credal religion requiring faith in a particular higher being or set of doctrines, I can imagine the focus of the four upcoming worship services. But for Unitarian Universalists, the theme is likely a lot broader.

The dictionary’s first definition of “faith” is “complete trust or confidence in someone or something.” These past five years have shaken our faith—our trust and confidence—in ourselves, in one another, in our communities and governments, in democracy, in the future itself. What greater need than the renewal of our faith!

Sometimes renewal is an individual quest—through meditation, other spiritual practices, therapy, nature, exercise, or hobbies. Sometimes closer connections with family, friends, and co-workers can renew our faith in other people. Sometimes working with others to address social and racial oppression, defend democracy, or combat climate change can restore at least some faith in our future. Some of these quests can occur within a community like UUCSS, where we find spiritual inspiration, fellowship, and meaningful opportunities for service.

As Spring nears, some of the ways this community is renewing my trust and confidence include:

- The generosity of UUCSS members in continuing to support our community with time, talent, and treasure
- The dedicated, creative work of our Minister, her staff, and many volunteers in handling the several switches in the format of our worship services
- The amazing service of a number of volunteers performing administrative tasks while we search for a new staff member
- The tireless, years-long endeavor of the Capital Improvements Committee to bring us to the threshold of Phase 2 renovations to the Community Building.

The Board recently held a “financial summit” with the Rev. Megan Foley, UUA Regional Lead, who told us that preparing a budget is an act of faith—faith that the congregation will support our long-held vision of what UUCSS can become. The Board has prepared a proposed budget reflecting the effects of changed circumstances on Phase 2 expenses, as well as our crucial need to augment our administrative staff. Please be receptive to Rev. Kristin, the Board, and the ABD team and stewards as they explain this vision and request your support.

Because I believe so deeply in this, and because the proposed budget requires an increase in pledges from last year’s, I’m planning to raise my pledge by the percentage of increase. Of course, not everyone will be able to do that, but please open your minds and hearts to this renewal of our faith in our community’s future. We appreciate whatever you can contribute.

LEARN

Message From Laura Solomon, Director of Spiritual Growth



It seems so fitting that our theme this month is “Renewing Faith” as we are moving back to in-person activities and religious education at UUCSS! I know that being together in person, and particularly being with our children and youth, renews my faith and my hope in ways that are so necessary.

Between winter and COVID, it’s been a tough few months, hasn’t it? I wonder what you can do to renew your faith as we move closer to the promise of spring and warmer weather, and as we begin regathering again?

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Have you seen the snowdrops yet? Perhaps you can take a walk or go for a drive and notice all the signs of new life beginning to emerge.
- Is there something you read or revisit that renews your faith or your intentions? What might it be like to revisit a favorite book of poetry, for instance, or a resource you found particularly inspiring in the past? I recently revisited adrienne maree brown’s *Emergent Strategy* for reminders about our capacity to respond to ongoing change, and read for the first time Ada Limón’s book of poetry called *The Carrying*—where I fell in love with her poem, “Instructions on Not Giving Up.” (Link: [Instructions on Not Giving Up by Ada Limón - Poems | poets.org](#)).
- I know some families have a tradition of sharing “roses and thorns” around the dinner table. What were the good parts of the day (the roses)? What were the not-so-good parts of the day (the thorns)?

I like to add in the buds—the things we are hopeful for or excited about that are bringing some joy, hope, and expectation into our lives. My buds today are excitement about our upcoming RE programming, and looking forward to gathering in in-person community with our children and youth again.

If this is not yet part of your family routine, maybe you try it out for the month of March... what are your roses, thorns, and buds?

There is so much to look forward to, yet even positive change is change that can feel challenging. Thank goodness we have this hope—and grace-filled community—to renew our faith.

Welcoming Our New RE Coordinator—Dominique Robinson-Coleman!



We are so excited to introduce Dominique Robinson-Coleman as our new Religious Education Coordinator. Dominique comes to us with wonderful experience in the areas of social justice work and community organizing as well as experience in education and work with children and youth. She has a Master of Arts in Theological Studies from Fuller Theological Seminary and is interested in continuing to learn about Unitarian Universalism. The hiring committee found her to be energetic and passionate about many topics, and we are all excited to work with her! Dominique started work at UUCSS on February 27, and you will be able to meet her at our first in-person RE on March 6. Stay tuned for more information about a "Welcome Dominique" party on March 20 after the worship service!


RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SCHEDULE

MARCH

- 3/6 - In-person Children's Chapel for grades Pre-K - 5
In-person programming for grades 6-8 and YRUU
- 3/13 - Virtual grade-based RE
- 3/20 - In-person Art Assembly for grades Pre-K - 5
In-person programming for grades 6-8 and YRUU
- 3/27 - Virtual grade-based RE

APRIL

- 4/3 - Multigenerational Worship (about "Encanto"!)
- 4/10 - Virtual grade-based RE
- 4/17 - Easter! Multigenerational worship and egg hunts!
- 4/24 - Multigenerational Earth Day service



UUCSS History: The Beginning

In observance of the 70th anniversary of the founding of UUCSS, Jo Paoletti is updating the history series originally published in the Uniter in 2017 and 2018.

Imagine a time when there was no Beltway. New Hampshire Avenue was a two-lane road through farmland. The only building at 10309 New Hampshire was a small stable.

In the early 1950s, in far-off Massachusetts, recently ordained minister David MacPherson got a tip from a friend at the Universalist Church of America (UCA). The Universalist Memorial Church in DC, she told him, was hoping to establish a new congregation in the burgeoning Maryland suburbs. David and his wife Dotty drove down from Massachusetts and stayed overnight at the Tabard Inn before meeting with the Rev. Seth Brooks from DC's Universalist Memorial. Rev. Brooks had told the UCA that he had 90 people ready to plant the new congregation, but MacPherson soon discovered that claim was "a fantasy." The actual number was just 13, but Brooks assured him that all were "absolutely committed" to the project. David and Dotty MacPherson moved to Maryland.



David and Dotty McPherson

The Takoma Park-Silver Spring Universalist Fellowship was officially founded on September 18, 1952. Its financial situation was precarious—they had a pledge of a few years of support from Universalist Memorial Church, and a loan from the UCA to purchase some farmland on New Hampshire Avenue. (Founding member Max Miller had to drive to Boston and back overnight to pick up the check and get it to the bank on time.) But on October 12, 1952, the minister and a small group of adults and children gathered for worship at Rolling Terrace Elementary School and the story of our congregation began. In December of that year, the congregation moved to Hillandale Elementary School (now CHI), which was our home until we completed the first sanctuary building, which is now the Community Hall. The first service was held there circa 1962.



The stable/Fellowship House in 1952

The small stable on the newly purchased property has had many uses over the years. Soon after the land purchase, the stable was remodeled to serve as a meeting space. The hayloft became the minister's office. Members of the youth group (LRY, or Liberal Religious Youth, which was the precursor to the current YRUU) cleared the site of rocks for a parking area. Now, the stable is the home of the YRUU.

As the name of the congregation implies, we were not yet Unitarian Universalists—the merger of the two denominations was nearly a decade in the future—but the original founders were already moving away from the Christian Universalism of the "mother" church in DC. Rev. McPherson describes the members as a mix of "humanists, naturalistic theists, and agnostics," which matched his own brand of Universalism well. A few of the founding members were sufficiently uncomfortable with this theological diversity that they resigned their membership and returned to Universalist Memorial in DC.

Rev. McPherson's picture is part of the "history spiral" found in the vestibule outside our current sanctuary.



CONNECT



Committee Updates

Annual Budget Drive: All In, Together!

Your Annual Budget Drive (ABD) co-chairs Tamara Bowman, Teresa Meeks, Dina Raley, and Pat Schied, are working with other church members and staff for the opening of the 2022 ABD Campaign: All In, Together! The campaign launches on March 13. Stewardship visits will be scheduled following the launch, and we hope all congregants will say yes to meeting with a volunteer steward, and work with them to schedule a virtual meeting.

Your pledges are as critical as ever! This year's budget includes continued funding for improving our campus buildings. Improvements that will create a space more inviting for us as well as attractive to renters. Our proposed budget also includes a full time church administrator to provide the support our staff and congregation need to move forward.

Whether we're online or in the sanctuary we are All In, Together!

Green Sanctuary

Maryland Climate and Environment Bills Need Your Support NOW!

The two bills below are high priority. Please contact your representatives (3 delegates and one senator) NOW to urge them to vote for them. All you have to say is "Please vote in favor of the Climate Solutions Now Act and the Environmental Human Rights Amendment" and give your name and address. Don't wait—votes are coming up soon and the 2022 session ends April 11.

Not sure who your reps are? Check mdelect.net to find out and link to their email addresses.

There are a lot of great climate and environment bills this year. Stay tuned for more information in the coming weeks.

CLIMATE SOLUTIONS NOW ACT OF 2022 will:

Update MD's emission reduction goals to match the best climate science

- Experts say we must achieve greenhouse gas net neutrality by mid-century.
- The bill will also require a 60% reduction by 2030 (based on 2006 levels) and net neutrality by 2045.
- We must also update our methane accounting practices to best measure our emissions.

Invest resources in overburdened communities

- Creates the Climate Justice Corp Program to promote climate justice with greenhouse gas reduction projects in disproportionately affected communities.
- Directs the MD Dept. of Environment to define overburdened communities and develop a plan to address environmental justice concerns.
- Creates the Climate Catalytic Capital Fund within the Maryland Clean Energy Center.

Reduce emissions in buildings

- Requires new buildings to meet all water and space heating demands with electric systems as early as 2023.
- Set building emission standards for public and private buildings.
- Creates a Building Energy Transition Implementation Task Force to create a plan to reduce our building emissions.

Electrify our state vehicles and school buses

- Requires a portion of purchased state passenger cars to be zero emission starting in 2023 and reaching 100% by 2027.
- Requires a portion of purchased state light-duty vehicles be zero emissions starting in 2028 and reaching 100% by 2033.
- Requires school boards to only purchase zero emission school buses unless unable to obtain sufficient funds starting in 2024.

ENVIRONMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS AMENDMENT

Why we need it

In 1973, the Maryland General Assembly recognized that "each person has a fundamental and inalienable right to a healthful environment" (Maryland Environmental Policy Act—MEPA). However, for 48 years this policy has largely been ignored, resulting in devastating effects, including:

Overburdened Communities & Concentrated Pollution and Health Disparities

- There is an 18-year difference in life expectancy between Roland Park in the north east and Downtown Baltimore.
- Pollution is concentrated in communities of color and those with low incomes across the state, including Baltimore City, Charles County, Prince George's County, and the Eastern Shore.
- 200 pollution emitting centers in a 2.5- mile radius in S. Baltimore.
- 4x the asthma hospitalizations in Baltimore compared to the Maryland average.

The Environmental Human Rights amendment will add two new protections in the Declaration of Rights of the Maryland State Constitution.

1. That each person has the fundamental and inalienable right to a healthful and sustainable environment and said right shall not be infringed.
2. That the State, as trustee, shall protect, conserve, and enhance Maryland's natural resources, including its air, lands, waters, wildlife, and ecosystems, on behalf of present and future generations. The proposed constitutional amendment will add two new protections in the Declaration of Rights of the Maryland State Constitution.

Learn more at <https://marylandclimateaction.com/> or contact greensanctuary@uucss.org

Racial Justice Task Force Invites You to the UUA Common Read

The role of police in public safety is a hot one. This is exemplified locally around the issue of police in our public schools.

In 2021, the Montgomery County Council decided that armed Student Resource Officers (SROs) would transition out of schools to a Community Engagement Officer role.

However, after the tragic shooting at Magruder High School last month, some community members and elected officials called to put SROs back in schools. Montgomery County Public Schools immediately invested in more police presence that will result in increased police presence during school events, ‘peak’ and ‘high traffic’ times, and even involve police presence in student study circles.

This reflects what is happening across the country as crime rates rise, and the “defund the police” movement is blamed for political losses in states such as Virginia. Are you conflicted about the role of police in maintaining public safety? The UUA has taken on the issue of defunding or abolishing the police with our Common Read for 2021-22, *Defund Fear: Safety Without Policing, Prisons, and Punishment* by Zach Norris (Beacon Press, 2021).

RJTF invites you to read *Defund Fear* and join in a discussion of it some time in April, date to be determined. Resources are available to purchase books for members and friends in financial need who would like to participate in the Common Read. To request support, email rjtf@uucss.org or contact Rev. Kristin or DSG Laura. If you prefer, it will also be possible to join identity-based online groups in geographically dispersed cohorts, if that better supports your faithful exploration of the book.

The RJTF will also share multimedia resources for this Common Read, including a traditional discussion guide, as they are developed. You may also be interested in this [recorded conversation \(Vimeo, 1:10:00\)](#) moderated by *UU World* executive editor Roger Santodomingo with Zach Norris. The author engages with UU religious professionals about ways the book resonates with UU theology(ies).

You can also find out more about the book on the [UUA website](#). Here is their summary:

Zach Norris shifts the conversation about public safety away from fear and punishment and toward growth and support systems for our families and communities. In *Defund Fear*, Norris explores what has gone wrong, and why, and who has been most impacted by repressive and racist policing systems. He offers a new blueprint for public safety that holds people accountable while still holding them in community.

RJTF will be following up with a date and time, so be sure to check the weekly email, the April Uniter, [groups.io](#), and our Facebook page in the coming weeks.

Update from the UUCSS Afghan Resettlement Task Force

As I write this on Valentine’s Day, I am feeling overwhelmed and very grateful for the love and generosity our UUCSS family has shown to our newly “adopted”—and still very vulnerable—family from Afghanistan.

The Thina family warmly welcomed volunteers from the UUCSS Afghan Resettlement Task Force, who met them for the first time at their temporary home in a local Silver Spring hotel. Sharif and Jamila Thina and their three children Zameer (5), Sawea (4), and Hawa (13 months) will be living at the hotel until an apartment becomes available.

Rev. Kristin, Jeremy Holt, Pat Scheid, and Maureen Malloy met the Thinas in a visit facilitated by Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Region, the resettlement agency working with the family. They were grateful for the donated winter coats from UUCSS, which fit the children perfectly, as well as the toys, children’s blankets, books, tea set, and fruit basket. Zameer is already speaking some English words and was eager and proud to point to familiar words in the children’s picture dictionary we brought.

Jamila served tea and treats while we listened to Sharif explain, through an interpreter, his concerns about settling into their new home and responsibility for family members who remain in Afghanistan. He is eager to find a job—any job—so he can support his extended family.

The following evening Jeremy and Maureen accompanied the family to Target to buy clothes with gift cards donated by UUCSS. Communication was challenging without an interpreter—and Google Translate was a lifesaver—but we managed!

In mid-February Sharif enrolled in ESL classes at Montgomery College, which he will attend via Zoom until mid-April.

The family looks forward to moving into an apartment they can call their own. While the family's needs are many, our immediate goal is to build relationships of trust, respect, and friendship with Sharif, Jamila and the children. While they continue to live in the hotel we will coordinate and provide transportation for appointments and shopping, and help orient them to public transportation and other community resources. In the future, we also hope to organize a social event where members of UUCSS can welcome the Thina family to the area (stay tuned!)

We have raised more than \$8,000 to support the Thina family over the next 6 months. **Importantly, the Task Force, in consultation with the ABD Co-Chairs and Rev. Kristin, have decided to take a fundraising break until the end of April, while UUCSS focuses on its Annual Budget Drive, which starts this month.** Thanks to your generosity, we are in a very strong position to fully support the initial stages of this project, and will be using this time to further assess the Thina family's needs and priorities.

We will keep the congregation updated on the Thina family and our group's activities via the weekly all-church email, Groups.io and our Facebook group. A heartfelt thank you to all for your support—every bit of it is appreciated. —*Maureen Malloy*

Women's Book Group

March 28: 7:30 pm. No long-term obligation needed and, for now, hybrid format. We are reading *The Ninth Hour* by Ann McDermott.

Men's Book Group

April 3: 7 pm. We are reading *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* by David Graeber and David Wengrow. Given the length of the book (more than 700 pages), we will not be meeting in March to give people plenty of time to devour the book. Unless Covid conditions change, we will meet to discuss the book on Zoom. If you are interested in joining the discussion, let [Richard Lorr](#) know, get the book, and join us on Zoom.

Please look for future Book Group listings in the Events section of the Uniter.

The "Volunteer Spotlight" is now the "Member Spotlight!"

In this space, the "Volunteer Spotlight" usually appears. UUCSS is changing this column to "Member Spotlight" (using a loose definition of "member" since we also include active friends) to allow people to get to know one another better regardless of their role at the church.

Member Spotlight: Ann Walk



Ann Walk is not your typical UUCSS member. She lives in Michigan and has never lived in Maryland. An invitation from childhood friend Deborah Thornton to attend an online service led to a realization that we are her tribe. Since then, she has been a resolute attendee and even helped with a church cleanup when she visited. While this may seem unusual, in Ann-space this is all part of a continuum.

Eight years ago, after the death of her husband, she moved to St. Croix, USVI, to stay with a friend and ended up living there. This opened her to a sense of interconnectedness or as she states the Blinding Flashes of the Obvious (BFOs) that nourish spirit and soul. While being there was healing, she began to feel a disquiet and a need to go back to Michigan. Shortly after returning, her son-in-law was diagnosed with cancer, and she was able to be there for her family. Since then, she has been listening and the Universe has had a lot to tell her.

It was not a quiet whisper but a “bolt of lightning” when she experienced UUCSS. Everything resonated down to her core. The UU principles aligned with her principles and people seemed so welcoming, a feeling of connection that has grown with every visit. Her local UU churches do not seem the same, so she is hoping to move to Maryland. In the meantime, perhaps you can share a Blinding Flash of the Obvious when she next visits us.

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

Staff Hours and Contact Information

Administrator

The Administrator Search Team is currently hiring for the Office Administrator position. The Administrator@uucss.org email address continues to be monitored regularly, though not necessarily daily, and volunteers are performing many administrative tasks. Thank you for your patience and understanding as responses may take more time than usual.

Dr. Laura Solomon, Director of Spiritual Growth

Laura is available by appointment Tuesday through Friday at dsg@uucss.org and (443) 671-2845. Monday is her day off. If something urgent comes up outside normal office hours or over the weekend please text or call her. You can schedule an appointment with Laura at www.calendly.com/uucssdsg

Michael Holmes, Music Director

Michael works Thursday evenings, Sunday mornings, and is available at other times by appointment. Michael can be reached at musicdirector@uucss.org.

Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt, Minister

Rev. Kristin works Tuesday through Thursday from 10:00am to 4:00pm. Mondays is her writing days and Friday is her day off. She is available at minister@uucss.org and 202-780-7164. If you experience a pastoral care emergency outside normal office hours or over the weekend please text or call her. You can schedule an appointment with Rev. Kristin at www.calendly.com/rev-kristin-schmidt

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FIRST CLASS

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Submissions are due by the 17th of the prior month.

Uniters are published monthly September-June by the Unitarian Universalist Church of Silver Spring.

Send information and visuals to uniter@uucss.org.

Format guidelines for submissions: Text must be in a form that it can be edited, either in a Google Doc (preferred), Word file, or in the body of an email that can be copied and pasted. Graphics must be in a format in which they can be repositioned and resized—jpeg is greatly preferred.

Co-editors are **Lynn Cave** and **Caroline Stauss**.

To receive a PDF email version of the newsletter, contact the church office at administrator@uucss.org.

To receive a mailed copy of the **Uniter** for the year, please send **\$24 to UUCSS, Attention: Collector**.