

# October 2019

## UNITER

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF SILVER SPRING  
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### Sunday Worship Services—10:30 AM

Nursery care and religious education for children through grade 12 are offered during the worship service. ASL interpreting is provided during the service.

There is one service at 10:30 a.m. followed by Coffee Hour.

#### **October 6: COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY** Rev. Lyn Cox

As Unitarian Universalists (UUs) with awareness of our interdependence, we reflect on the ways we can either help create an environment for wellbeing and positive choices, or we can contribute to an environment of injury. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote: "...morally speaking, there is no limit to the concern one must feel for the suffering of human beings, that indifference to evil is worse than evil itself, that in a free society, some are guilty, but all are responsible." As the Jewish High Holidays continue, we draw wisdom from the observance of Yom Kippur and the spiritual practice of taking responsibility.

#### **October 13: ORIGIN STORIES** Rev. Lyn Cox

On this weekend of Indigenous People's Day, we consider the truths, lies, and myths that we absorb about the origins of our land, our nation, and the communities to which we belong. What we think we know about where we come from has implications for how we treat one another, and for how we reconfigure a just community for the future.

#### **October 20: COMING OUT IN FAITH** Rainbow Alliance

"Coming out in Faith" is organized by the Rainbow Alliance as part of our commitment to renewing our Welcoming Congregation status. Congregants will share their "coming out" stories: personal stories about their decisions, actions, and reactions to sharing their sexual orientation and/or gender identity more openly.

#### **October 27: FALLING LEAVES** Rev. Lyn Cox

As the hours of daylight and darkness hold each other in balance, we consider the balancing acts of holding each other in community through covenant. Covenant is less about laws and more about promises—about being bound together by something larger than ourselves and toward a greater purpose that we share. We might say we have expectations of each other, though we also expect that we'll fall short sometimes. As imperfect and yet aspiring humans, we balance acceptance and accountability, fear and hope, healthy boundaries and open hearts. We'll reflect on the messy and dynamic art of being held in covenant.

On November 3, there will be a pre-arranged fire drill during the Worship Service so that in the event of an actual fire, we will understand how to evacuate the Sanctuary and all other rooms on our campus safely. Prior to the drill, Rev. Lyn will make an announcement and point out the exits from the Sanctuary. Ushers and worship associates will be available to guide everyone to exits and to assist those with limited mobility. While those in the Sanctuary are exiting, RE teachers will guide children and youth to exit the classrooms, nursery, and YRUU fellowship house as we make our way to the farthest/back playground and elsewhere.

# INSPIRE

## Interim Minister's Column by Rev. Lyn Cox A People of Belonging



UUs aren't always too sure about belonging. Sometimes we have experience with bullying or exclusion based on speaking the truth of our hearts or our identities, and this leads us to be cautious about trusting that we can be included. Sometimes we choose to stick with our ideals rather than conform to expectations that appear to be unjust. Sometimes we simply need more skills for being in relationship, for being part of something larger than ourselves.

On the other hand, sometimes we're eager and equipped to be joiners, to be a people of belonging. There are UUs who are secure in their rootedness in this faith, ready to try anything that supports the mission of the community, confident that a congregation changing form doesn't change the way the faith embraces them. There are new UUs who are so excited to have finally found a spiritual home; they sign on to the obligations and responsibilities of membership with vigor, not wanting to waste another moment that they could be spending as members of a UU congregation. There are UUs who are fluent in their own faith and ready to join in coalitions for justice and interfaith understanding, to be part of circles within circles of community. Our eagerness and skill level and understanding of what it means to belong varies widely.

October's Soul Matters theme asks us to consider what it means to be a people of belonging. In worship and in small groups, we'll reflect on belonging to each other, to a larger purpose, to the ancestors who call to us, to the earth. We'll also examine the possibility that there are people who have not been welcomed into our communities, and plan our responses. As the weather takes on a real chill and many of us are drawn indoors to the modern equivalent of a hearth, it is a good time to think about being in community, about what it means to be home.

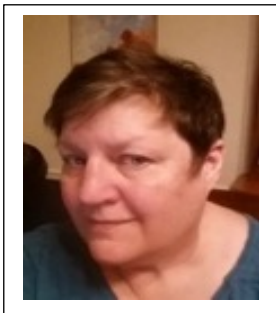
The pilot small group for Soul Matters begins meeting regularly this month. The group hasn't agreed to be called the Soul Pilots, but that's how I refer to them in my head. This group will practice the Soul Matters method for small group ministry and will meet twice a month to use the resources. We hope that some of the facilitators for new small groups in 2020–2021 will emerge from the pilot group, though it's possible that not all of this year's facilitators will go on to lead groups of their own. The Soul Matters resources are also available to our established small groups such as Inreach, book groups, and Creative Aging. If you lead one of these groups and want to receive a packet of small group resources each month, please let me know.

Part of being a warm and welcoming community is constantly examining the assumption that we are as welcoming as we think we are. Humor that was once commonplace is now understood to be off-putting. Expectations around courtesy and small talk that were once thought to be universal turn out to be culturally bound. Crowded spaces feel cozy to longtime members, and intimidating to many newcomers. It is natural to stop noticing when our language is full of acronyms, jargon, and inside jokes. Rather than assuming that everything we do is welcoming, because of course it's welcoming if our community is doing it, let us reflect and pay attention. The Membership Committee has been working very hard to make it easier for newcomers to find their way past the edges of outsiderdom, to feel that this life-saving community might be a place where they, too, can belong. We can all help by reaching out to visitors and newcomers. We can give our announcements and news items a second read-through for undefined terms before we publish them. If you are able to volunteer for Sunday Support, that is a fantastic way to help our community to be truly open to those who might yet belong.

UUCSS is a community of people who cooperate to accomplish great things. May the circle of belonging open ever more widely.

## INSPIRE (continued)

### Message From Tamara Bowman, Board President



The church year has begun. Thanks to the efforts of the Membership Committee, we have had our first annual welcome-back potluck and activity fair. I hope to attend the second annual event next year. It was a great time to reconnect and perhaps explore some other activities at the church. While throwing this great party, we didn't lose track of our 7th principle, our respect for the interdependent web. Thanks to the diligent efforts of the Green Sanctuary Committee, we produced three bags of compostables and only one-half bag of trash, aka landfill. Thanks to everyone who took part.

If you haven't noticed, the buildings and grounds are being spruced up. With the diligent efforts of the Property Committee, we have had multiple weekends of cleaning, scraping, and caulking, along with weeding and trimming. Now the painting has begun.

Be sure to look around as you enter the church and admire the improvements.

The Board has approved the establishment of a task force to review the UUCSS constitution, as a first step in bringing our governance documents into the 21st century. No comprehensive review has been conducted since 1969! Board member **Maggie Hayes** is leading the Constitutional Revision (RevCon) task force of several other congregants – **Susannah Numa**, **Jo Paoletti**, and **John Roberts**. This small group will examine the Unitarian Universalist Association's (UUA's) guidance on bylaws and previous comments on our text, consult with focus groups within the congregation on particular issues (e.g., membership categories), organize discussion sessions with interested members of the congregation, and come up with a proposal that the Board will consider for presentation to the congregation at the annual meeting next June. If you are interested in learning more about this project, please contact Maggie Hayes at [hayesmf@gmail.com](mailto:hayesmf@gmail.com).

September continues to be packed with church activities. There is still the Leadership Retreat and Catocin. I look forward to seeing all of you there.

The August Board agenda included a discussion on policy for the Operating Reserve and approval for the creation of a task force for the review and update of the UUCSS Constitution. The Board is addressing at least one strategic plan goal each meeting; for August, the focus was communication. There was an update from the Safety Committee and a review of the safety plan. For the upcoming September Board meeting, we will have a decision on the policy for the Operating Reserve and an update from the RevCon task force. We will make a decision on a revised safety plan and schedule our first fire drill. The strategic plan focus will be assessing the minister and ministries of the church, along with follow-up discussion for the Leadership Retreat and approval of interim minister appraisal and goals. The minutes and agenda for the Board are posted in the dropbox for the benefit of the congregation.

#### UUCSS Current Financial Status.

	Expected	YTD
Pledges – Annual Budget Drive (ABD)	\$396,414.00	\$105,962.00
Other Income	\$141,800.00	\$24,774.00
Expenses	\$528,393.00	\$80,236.00
Capital Campaign	Total Collected \$1,447,229.00	Current Balance \$1,146,447.00

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## LEARN

### UPDATE FROM THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Religious Education classes for children and youth are in full swing! Many thanks to the volunteers who took on extra duties and offered extra measures of patience during the transition time when UUCSS was without a full-time DRE. We're looking forward to welcoming Interim DRE Marsha Thrall this month! Meanwhile, the show goes on.

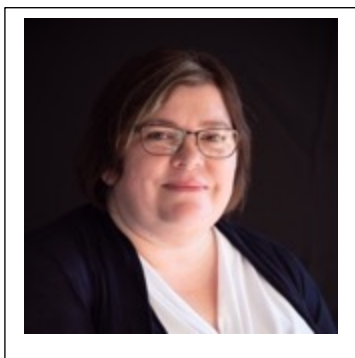
On October 6, all of the regular RE classes will meet; however, this will be the day of the no-alarm, RE-only fire drill. We expect that this will be a swift and smooth test run for the children's classes, nursery, and youth group. As always, please allow teachers to complete the fire drill, and do not pick up children from the fire drill assembly area, as this will make it harder to confirm that all children and youth are accounted for. We anticipate that the fire drill will be completed by 11:45 and you will be able to pick up children from their classrooms as usual after service.

As of this writing, it appears that we will not be able to plan a Halloween Party this year. With volunteers focused on keeping the program going during the transition time, there were not extra volunteer hours available to plan this. The YRUU youth are still planning their haunted house for after the service on October 27. Stay tuned for how you can help make seasonal celebrations happen for other holidays this year.

Other than the fire drill, the RE schedule is fairly normal for the first three Sundays in October. On October 6, 13, and 20, Nursery, preschool, Coming of Age, and YRUU meet at 10:30 in their classrooms; while Kindergarten through Middle School begin in the sanctuary and proceed to their classes after the message. October 27 is a multigenerational worship service, during which we will remember ancestors (by choice or by family) and our beloved dead; you are welcome to bring a photo or a memento to place on the altar.

If you have questions about Religious Education, please reach out to RE Assistant Michael Knaapen at [REassistant@uucss.org](mailto:REassistant@uucss.org).

### MESSAGE FROM MARSHA THRALL OUR NEW INTERIM DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION



Writing a biography is a tricky thing. All online resources encourage writing in the third person, while packing in credentials, and a slight snippet of one's personal life in order to be "relatable". And for professional purposes, this is a great approach to introducing one's self to people whom they've yet to meet. But to me, this approach is well, a bit impersonal.

As an addendum to my bio that you may have already read, I'd like to use the space in this first reflection of mine as Interim Director of Religious Education at UUCSS to share a little more information about myself, and why I believe religious education is my calling, or vocation.

I have, for as long as I can remember, questioned the ideas of God and religion. One of these memories is from my childhood. At around six years old, I sat in the living room of my grandparent's home, and listened as a young, LDS missionary tried to explain the Mormon idea of God and family to me. His explanation left me with more questions than answers, and I could tell that the questioning of my six year old mind frustrated him. As I evolved into adulthood, my questions about the idea of God and religion grew and grew. I have experimented with a few Christian methods of defining God, but as of this writing, I'm still in a space of having more questions than answers in matters concerning the idea of God and religion.

## LEARN (continued)

### Message from the Interim Director of Religious Education

What I have learned, as I have worked through this “God-quest” of mine is that “understanding” God – or even the non-presence of God – is not something that my limited human knowledge is capable of defining. Rather, in my quest for God, and understanding through religion, I have learned that the only pieces of God that can maybe be grasped is that in my humanness, I have been gifted with the ability to consider the idea of God, or even the non-presence of God through the exercise of a “free and responsible search for truth and meaning.” In *New Seeds of Contemplation*, Trappist monk, mystic, and social activist Thomas Merton wrote “vocation is not simply to be, but to work together with God in the creation of our own life, our own identity, our destiny”. I’m excited to begin this journey of Religious Educator with UUCSS. I believe that we are at the beginning of a joyful journey of “working together” with one another, to discern what the new “identity” of Religious Education can look like, while building upon a foundation of ideals of truth and meaning. Thank you for welcoming me into your congregation. Thank you for joining with me as I travel on my personal vocational journey. But most importantly, thank you for trusting me to be in conversation with your community as you journey through this new phase of your congregational search for meaningful religious education.

Peace.



## CONNECT

### GREETINGS FROM THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

As we start a new year together, we want to take a moment to let everyone know of an important change and some tips for welcoming visitors and potential new members.

Starting October 1, all visitors who sign in at the front desk will be given a name tag that clearly shows they are a visitor. The intention behind this is to make our visitors more visible to our members and friends in welcoming them. UUCSS prides itself on being welcoming and friendly, and this is a reminder that staying committed to welcoming guests is a tradition and a shared value for all.

If you are like me and don't love making small talk with strangers, here are a few tips and ideas for talking to someone new:

--Ask what brought them to UUCSS

--Ask where they are from and where they live

--Let them know about some interesting committee or group at the church that they can get involved in, such as the upcoming auction.

--Let them know that we offer a UUCSS 101 class and a Pathways class, and the dates for those classes can be found on the bulletin board next to the elevator.

It is everyone's responsibility to help our visitors feel welcome and connected. If you see someone with a VISITOR name tag standing alone, please make every effort to make them feel welcome. Show them where to get coffee, where the restrooms are, how to get their kids into RE, etc. I guarantee that they feel more awkward than you.

In fellowship,  
Dina Raley, Membership Chairperson &  
Mary Beth Lerner, Membership Assistant Chair

## CONNECT (continued)

### Check out the Sunday Support Team!

The Sunday Support Team provides care and coverage for every Sunday morning service at UUCSS year-round. We are a large committee of approximately 40 WONDERFUL volunteers who make sure that you are greeted and welcomed every week; you are guided to the clean and orderly sanctuary for worship and personal time; your children are safely led to their RE classrooms; your generous monetary offerings are collected and counted; your valuable attendance and participation are recorded for our larger denominational count; your friends and visitors are greeted and oriented, including your deaf friends and family; and your appetites are fed with fair trade coffee and Oreos and homemade goodies.

Sounds fun? IT IS!! **And we want new folks on our five teams.** We are a necessary committee where one only has to work once every 5 weeks, and we do not have other regular meetings. Please contact [sundaysupport@uucss.org](mailto:sundaysupport@uucss.org) for more information on how you can join a Sunday Support Team.

## RAINBOW ALLIANCE

**October is National LGBTQ History Month &  
October 11, 2019 Marks the 30th Anniversary of National “Coming Out” Day.**

The October 20 service, “Coming out in Faith,” is organized by the Rainbow Alliance as part of our commitment to renewing our Welcoming Congregation status. Congregants will share their “coming out” stories: personal stories about their decisions, actions, and reactions to sharing their sexual orientation and/or gender identity more openly.

On October 27, 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m. in the UUCSS Sanctuary, the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights will offer a free workshop on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, also as part of our congregation’s commitment to renewing our Welcoming Congregation status. Learn how you can be welcoming to queer and gender non-conforming people at our church, in the workplace, and in your community. Just being ok with “gay” people isn’t enough. Without meaning to, you can communicate in ways that are hurtful or alienating to queer and gender non-conforming people. Become more informed on how you can be an ally and truly welcoming.

The course is taught by **Keith Merkey**, a former Baptist Minister from a non-welcoming congregation. Keith has been conducting workshops to help people understand their role in creating welcoming spaces. It’s going to be good. If you want to advertise the workshop further, including outside UUCSS, please email the [rainbowalliance@uucss.org](mailto:rainbowalliance@uucss.org), and we can send you a flyer.

**If you plan to attend, please RSVP to [rainbowalliance@uucss.org](mailto:rainbowalliance@uucss.org).**

**Light lunch and vegetarian options will be available for a donation.**

## CONNECT (continued)



**September 30<sup>th</sup> Deadline to  
Submit Donations!**

**Chairs: Emily Tien, Linda Barrett, & Jim Street**

The annual UUCSS auction is one of the church's most enjoyable events as well as a terrific fundraiser. It is an evening of great fun and fellowship at which donations made by UUCSS members and friends are auctioned off to others within the church family.

You will find everything from terrific things such as paintings, pottery, and other artistic creations to homemade baked goods made for sale the night of the auction or promised for a later date. Many members and friends offer special dinners or outings, or offer services or lessons. Each donated event offers more opportunities to get to know fellow members and friends better.

### **Donation Suggestions & Submission Form**

Know what you'd like to donate? Enter them using our online form at <https://uucss.org/auction/donate>.

Not sure what to give? Think about what events, outings, meals or services you would like to bid on, and would enjoy hosting. Be creative. Here's a list of suggestions, including items from members' wish lists:

#### **Donation Suggestions**

Meals  
Ethnic Dinners  
Activities/Events  
Trips/Groups/Family Outings  
Services  
Workshops/How To  
Seasonal Events  
Yardwork/Gardening  
Childcare  
Pet Sitting Personal Organizing

#### **Members' Wish Lists**

Handyman/room painting  
In-home computer help (slow computer, Word/Excel, social media)  
Shelving installation  
Jewelry making/repair  
Learn massage  
Learn basic bike repair/riding  
Class in basic estate planning  
Learn UUCSS secret history

### **See last year's catalog for more ideas.**

The donation deadline is **September 30**: Submit your donation(s) today at <https://uucss.org/auction/donate>.

**Childcare is available. Reserve your spot today:** Reserve a space via e-mail to [childcare@uucss.org](mailto:childcare@uucss.org).

Be sure to include:  Names and ages of children  Information on allergies or other special needs

**The deadline to sign up for ASL interpretation is October 20. Email [auction@uucss.org](mailto:auction@uucss.org) to sign up.**

### **Volunteers needed!**

We need volunteers to set up for, run, and clean up after the auction. With enough volunteers, everyone will have plenty of opportunity to participate in and enjoy a well-run event. Let us know if you can help with an email to [auction@uucss.org](mailto:auction@uucss.org).

### **Dress up for the Under the Sea Auction**

Theme-related clothing/costumes are encouraged, and are part of what makes this such a special event. Be creative!

**Questions?** For more information and answers to any questions about this year's auction, or for a copy of last year's auction catalog, please contact the Auction Committee at [auction@uucss.org](mailto:auction@uucss.org).

## CONNECT (continued)

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### EVENTS IN BRIEF

**OCTOBER 6, 4:00 p.m.** UUSJ Social Justice Awards Gala 2019, Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington. 4444 Arlington Boulevard, Arlington, VA 22204. Buy tickets at <http://uusj.net/wp1/>.

**OCTOBER 26, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 noon.** Pathways to Membership class, Dolan Lounge.

**OCTOBER 27, 12:00 noon–2:00 p.m.** Workshop on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, Sanctuary.

**NOVEMBER 9, 9:30 a.m.–3:00 p.m.** Pastoral Care Workshop Helping Families Cope with Depression and Bipolar Disorder, Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington. 4444 Arlington Boulevard, Arlington, VA 22204.

**NOVEMBER 9, 5:30–9:30 p.m.** “Under the Sea” church auction.

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#### OCTOBER CHARITY OF THE MONTH

#### Supporting & Mentoring Youth Advocates & Leaders (SMYAL)

SMYAL --Supporting and Mentoring Youth Advocates and Leaders—<https://smyal.org>—supports and empowers lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth in the Washington, DC, metropolitan region. Through youth leadership, SMYAL creates opportunities for LGBTQ youth to build self-confidence, develop critical life skills, and engage their peers and community through service and advocacy. Committed to social change, SMYAL builds, sustains, and advocates for programs, policies, and services that LGBTQ youth need as they grow into adulthood.

Opportunities for youth include:

- After-school programs to help youth express themselves, develop leadership skills, and connect with other LGBTQ youth
  - An activist camp for high-school-age youth
  - The DC Regional Gay–Straight Alliance (GSA) Network
  - The Breaking Ground program, which uses theater and performing arts
  - Sexual health services
  - Online chat space/discussion groups
  - Transitional housing program for youth 18–24 years old
  - Youth training (e.g., healthy relationships, bullying, LGBTQ inclusive sexual health).
- SMYAL also offers adult cultural competency training.

#### OCTOBER VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH

#### STEPHANIE MCCONACHIE

As my husband and I searched for housing in anticipation of our move to Maryland in 2014, we began visiting UU churches in the area. On the two Sundays we visited UUCSS, there was a vibrancy to the total worship service and a casual friendliness that engaged us. That vibrancy and friendliness continues.

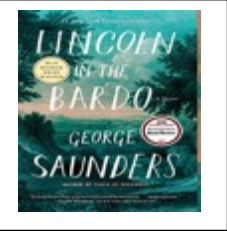
Serving on the Board as VP for Personnel has allowed me to learn so much more about UUCSS’s roots and aspirations. Much has been a valuable time commitment, but ask me sometime about using Craigslist to hire a temporary nursery caregiver. Forty phone calls and six interview no-shows

later, there’s joy that we found a talented nursery caregiver, but I’m glad the process is over. Re-publishing the *Uniter* with **Jane Larrick** let us bring the newsletter back on board with a new look. We think people actually read it—or at least some of these pages. It’s “fun” to have challenges to take on. Certainly, joining with others to develop a new UUCSS safety plan, canvassing with dynamic UUCSSers in battleground Virginia districts, and now beginning to sing in the choir have been good challenges for me.



## CONNECT (continued)

### WOMEN'S BOOK GROUP



The Women's Book Group is an informal gathering of interested readers of various ages and backgrounds, and the group has met continually since 2000, though we do not expect or ask for a long-term commitment. We meet on the fourth Monday of each month, 7:30–9:30 pm. It is possible for rides to be arranged. The book group coordinator is **Deborah Weiner**, and the contact email is [dweiner04@gmail.com](mailto:dweiner04@gmail.com). Please feel free to contact me or talk to me at church. Thank you for your interest! On October 27, we will discuss *Lincoln in the Bardo*, by George Saunders.

### MEN'S BOOK READING GROUP

We are now reading Neil Gaiman's 2001 novel, *American Gods*. We will meet to discuss the book [at 7:00 p.m. Sunday](#), October 27, at the home of **Bruce McConachie**, 7231 Windsor Lane Hyattsville, MD 20782

If you are interested in joining the group, contact **Richard Lorr** ([rlorr4@gmail.com](mailto:rlorr4@gmail.com)), get the book, and come to the next meeting. Hope to see you there!



### Update from Melinda Yalom, Administrator

I am very pleased by the really hard work that the Property Committee, the Labor Brigade, and other volunteers have been putting in to make the church buildings and grounds look really fine! There's been painting, carpentry work and repair, landscaping, etc. Thank you to ALL involved!





UUCSS

**Unitarian Universalist Church of Silver Spring**

10309 New Hampshire Avenue  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20903

FIRST CLASS

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Board President**

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**Tamara Bowman**  
Board President  
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Submissions to the *Uniter* are due by the 20th of the prior month. Send information and visuals to [uniter@uucss.org](mailto:uniter@uucss.org).

Format guidelines for submissions: Text must be in a form that it can be edited, either in a Microsoft 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.

The newsletter is published September–June by the Unitarian Universalist Church of Silver Spring.

Co-editors are **Jane Larrick** and **Stephanie McConachie**.

To receive a PDF email version of the newsletter, contact the church office at [administrator@uucss.org](mailto:administrator@uucss.org).

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

**Church office hours**

**Monday: 1–4 p.m.**

**Tuesday–Thursday: 9 a.m.–5 p.m.**

**Church website: [www.uucss.org](http://www.uucss.org)**