
May 2020

UNITER

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF SILVER SPRING
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WORSHIP UPDATE

Worship services are likely to be online only throughout May; however, please check your weekly email for updates.

May 3: FROM LIBERAL TO LIBERATING Rev. Kristin Schmidt

Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt will lead the second of two services as part of UUCSS Ministerial Candidating Week. Following the service, members of UUCSS will have an opportunity to vote to call Rev. Schmidt to be the congregation's next settled minister.

May 10: WHERE CHARITY AND LOVE ABIDE Rev. Lyn Cox

We take stock of a month of sacred days, including Eid Al Fitr, Shavuot, Pentecost, and Beltaine. Holy days in the traditions that we and our friends draw from remind us of what ignites our passion for this congregation and the Unitarian Universalist movement. From many sources, we receive sparks of inspiration for justice and kindness and the strength to go on.

May 17: BELOVED COMMUNITY Rev. Lyn with Members of the Racial Justice Task Force

As the congregation explores deeper engagement with multiculturalism and with dismantling racism, we reflect on both a spiritual and practical level about what it would mean to build the Beloved Community within UUCSS and beyond.

May 24: REFLECTIONS ON UIISM AND MEMORIAL DAY Evelyn DeNardo & Jeff Williams

Two members of UUCSS will discuss their personal experience with grief following deaths connected with military service. Evelyn will discuss the loss of her father to the war in Vietnam. She will recount the impact of this grief on a 9-year old girl who loved her father dearly and the implications of this loss into her adult life, and she will share how Unitarian Universalism affected her thinking on this loss. How might communities acknowledge pain and respond to loss more effectively and compassionately now than they did then? Jeff, an 18-year veteran of the U.S. Navy, will recount the situation and circumstances surrounding the loss of two Navy colleagues, one to a training accident and the other to suicide. What perspectives does Unitarian Universalism have to offer regarding these and other military deaths? Are these "tragic, unnecessary losses," "noble, honorable sacrifices," both, or neither? We'll consider both big-picture philosophy and personal stories in this honest examination of the meaning of Memorial Day.

May 31: COMING OF AGE Coming of Age Youth with Carey Schneider, Linda Barrett, Rev. Lyn Cox, & IDRE Marsha Thrall

Coming of Age is a Unitarian Universalist (UU) rite of passage for young adolescents. Similar to b'nai mitzvah for Jewish youth and Confirmation for Christian youth, Coming of Age recognizes a new stage of development, responsibility, and belonging in the religious community. For UUs, the responsibilities of this stage include spiritual and ethical discernment and channeling your gifts and talents in community. The seven youth of this year's Coming of Age class will co-lead this service in meditation, music, storytelling, and reflection.

INSPIRE

Interim Minister's Column by Rev. Lyn Cox



We had planned the theme of the month for May to be “thresholds,” along with the other congregations in the Soul Matters network. I had imagined exploring different kinds of liminal times and spaces, entering new perspectives through holidays like Beltaine and Eid Al Fitr, and preparing for change after your Candidating Week was complete. None of us anticipated that we would be spending another month of in-between time, creating sacred space poised on the balance of uncertainty during this pandemic. As it turns out, seeking wisdom and strength that we can carry through threshold times is extremely relevant.

First, I want to acknowledge the grief and fear that many are experiencing. There are those among us who have lost loved ones to the virus, and those among us who have lost loved ones for other reasons and could not be with them because of the virus. There are those among us who are vulnerable due to other health conditions, and those who have been ill with various things that may or may not have been the virus. Children and youth are witnessing firsthand the stress that their adults are under, as we try to work and parent and teach as best we can during an internationally traumatic chapter of history. Young people have their own worries, and may be expressing them in ways that are hard to interpret. I see you. This is hard. I believe in this community's capacity to respond. The people of UUCSS need each other now more than ever. People who have been waiting for their moment to try a liberating faith community need UUCSS now more than ever.

I am so grateful to the volunteers who are extending the shared ministry of the congregation through the Contact Tree. Active members and friends have been grouped into 12 branches, and each branch has volunteers who are helping make calls to others within that group. I have been meeting regularly with the branch leaders. Some of the original volunteers have needed to step back, and others have stepped up; this is how it should be in a resilient, mutually caring congregation. You back each other up. As we have gone through our contacts, we have discovered some necessary corrections to the directory. Some of our newer members and some of the active friends of the congregation did not make it into the most recent directory; we think we have corrected these, but if you have not been contacted by phone, email, text, or postal mail, please let a Lay Minister know (layministers@uucss.org).

The Contact Tree is a member-to-member shared ministry. Thank you to **Emily Harris** and **Linda Barrett** for helping to organize the list and keep track of the pastoral referrals coming in through the Contact Tree. Thank you to **Carol Hamilton** for helping to get the project started and creating a Google Form for tracking contact information changes and pastoral referrals. Thank you to **Melissa Hampton, Maggie Hayes, Mary Beth Lerner, Al Nathan, and Meredith Massey** for being branch leaders, allowing us to organize the congregation into reasonable-sized groups. Thank you to the Lay Ministers and our Care Coordinator for being both branch leaders and for continuing their compassionate presence as peer listeners: **Marcia Joiner** (chair), **Jiwon Kim, Jane Larrick, Jim Paoletti, Beverly Schnetzler, and Gretchen Wiederrecht**. We also have about two dozen volunteers who are making calls to others within their branches, coordinated by branch leaders. Thank you to everyone who is helping the congregation to care for one another.

This pandemic, though frightening in many ways, is also helping members to clarify their sense of mission for the congregation. Mutual care is part of that mission, as is creating sacred space in new ways online. In April, the Racial Justice Task Force and the Green Sanctuary team lifted up ways that UU principles can be put into action as people look for a place to channel their energy. I hope that the profound relevance of Unitarian Universalism and of UUCSS has been clear throughout these last 2 months. For those who are able, continuing to make financial gifts to UUCSS helps to keep this operation going. Please contact Rachel Vanarsdall at collector@uucss.org if you need help making your gift online, or if you would like to adjust your 2019–2020 pledge.

INSPIRE (continued)

Interim Minister's Column continued

Congratulations to Annual Budget Drive chairs **Cynthia Curry-Daniel** and **Jean Snell** for concluding a successful campaign. Despite this year's challenges, they led us through a process of celebration and discernment, and helped make sure everyone who wanted contact from a Visiting Steward was able to have that conversation. Please see their article elsewhere in the *Uniter*.

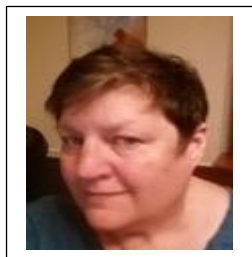
One way that members have been generous in addition to their regular pledge is with special gifts to the Minister's Discretionary Fund (MDF), which offers grants to people in the UUCSS community during times of financial distress. Since our modified operations began in March, we have received more than \$2,000 in donations to the MDF. The current policy for the MDF is that the grants go directly to creditors, such as paying a utility bill or a medical bill; that the grants are limited to one per family per year; and that the amount available for the grant is based on the amount that is in the account (usually not exceeding 10 percent of the total). These generous donations mean that larger grants will be available. If your family is having financial hardship due to the virus or for any other reason, please talk to me about whether a grant from the MDF can help.

From phone calls to financial donations to generosity of time and talent in our online worship services, members and friends are showing up for this community. You are transforming and strengthening connections to help each other through this difficult time. Keep holding on to your UU Principles, to each other, and to the open door that welcomes new people into this community.

In this month of thresholds, one of the things on our minds is that my time with you is short. I will be working with you through June. If this were a normal year, one of the last things I would do for UUCSS would be to go out of town to help represent the congregation at the UUA General Assembly (GA). Now that GA is now fully online, it's hard to say for sure what that will look like. Our current plan is that I will lead services the first two Sundays in June. I can't say for sure if we will be able to meet in person, though it looks unlikely at this point. The Interim Transition Team (**Catherine Buckler, Nancy Dougherty, Paul Iobst, Ryan Smith, Deborah Thornton**) is planning a celebration to help wrap up our ministry together that can be online if necessary. We'll have plenty of time to reflect back on these past 2 years through the Annual Report, in next month's *Uniter*, and over Zoom.

As I write this, Candidating Week is directly ahead. The *Uniter* will be published in the middle of it. I'm excited for UUCSS and the opportunities in front of you. Thank you so much to both last year's and this year's search committees for all of your hard work! Best of luck next year and beyond. I have faith in all that you can be and all that you can do as a congregation.

Message From Tamara Bowman, Board President



Hard to believe, but we're starting our second month of staying at home. The new normal is virtual services and virtual meetings. I've seen many of you in the chat as we enjoy our online service. It has been amazing watching the creativity and inspiration within our congregation come to life. It has been wonderful as some of our more far-flung members join us from across the country or around the globe. There have been some high points in online services, but I still look forward to seeing everyone in our Sanctuary.

The biggest news this month is our new ministerial candidate, **Rev Kristin Grassel Schmidt!** By the time you receive this, Candidating Week will be upon us—a candidating week like none before, since it's all virtual. I hope you are able to join one of the scheduled Zoom meetings and attend services to get to know Rev Kristin. Big thank you to our Search Committee, **Katie Kirk Haag, Steve Hirsch, Jeremy Holt, Anna Molpus, Beverly Schnetzler, Lisa Schumaker, and Sharon Snyder.** The vote to call Rev. Kristin will occur after the May 3 service. Information on how to join the meeting will be included with the service announcement. Active and standing members will be sent a SurveyMonkey link to submit their vote.

INSPIRE (continued)

Board President's Message continued

In more exciting news, please join me in welcoming our new Board President, **Carl Miller**. I will pass our virtual gavel to Carl at our June congregational meeting. Carl served on the previous search committee and has been part of the Strategic Planning Committee while on the Board. We have appreciated his sense of fairness and attention to detail while on the Board. We look forward to supporting him in his new role.

The Capital Improvements Committee (CIC) has continued moving forward with bids for work on the sanctuary. Scheduling is uncertain due to COVID-19, but the CIC is making sure we are able to move forward.

We had just begun our Annual Budget Drive (ABD) before physical distancing took effect. Even with the interruption in our normal routines, we have raised 87 percent of our target. There are still some outstanding pledges and members we have not heard from. If you have not pledged yet, please use the online form <https://uucss.org/abd/pledge/>. Look for other updates and a message from our ABD Chairs, **Jean Snell** and **Cynthia Curry-Daniel**.

After careful consideration, we will continue to have virtual services for the foreseeable future. We are monitoring the situation but will be cautious about reopening the church. It is preferable to continue in a virtual format rather than risk exposing members to COVID-19.

We may need to remain physically distant, but we can still socialize virtually. If you have a church meeting, please contact me at president@uucss.org to coordinate use of the UUCSS Zoom account. Plan for some time at the beginning of the meeting to work through tech issues and introduce everyone to how to use Zoom. If you have your own Zoom account and want some pointers, please send me an email and we can set up some time for Zoom 101.

The agenda for the April Board meeting included discussion on next steps with COVID-19; updates from the Search Committee and the Bylaws Revision Task Force (RevCon); discussion on budget for next year; and election of the 2020–2021 Board President. The minutes and agenda for the Board meetings are posted on dropbox for the benefit of the congregation.

As always, it is an honor to serve as your President.

May 3 Online Voting Extending the Call for a Settled Minister

At the conclusion of the Sunday, May 3, online service, standing and active members will be asked to join a short all-church meeting via Zoom. At the meeting, there will be an official motion to extend the call to our ministerial candidate, **Rev. Kristin Schmidt**. Once the motion has been accepted by a voice vote, standing and active members will receive an email from SurveyMonkey with a link to the SurveyMonkey site. Once on the site, members can cast their vote yes or no to extend the call to Rev. Kristin to become our settled minister.

At 1:00 p.m., the Zoom meeting will reconvene to report on the vote.

If anyone is having difficulty accessing the SurveyMonkey site, they can contact **Christa Maher**, Board Secretary, via email, boardsecretary@uucss.org. They can also call **Tamara Bowman** at 240-460-6107 for technical assistance.

By April 30, active and standing members who cannot access SurveyMonkey will have been sent a paper ballot. If you need a paper ballot and have not received one via snail mail by April 30, please call **Tamara Bowman** at 240-460-6107.

Annual Budget Drive Wrap-Up

This year's Annual Budget Drive launched in February, at which time we invited all members and friends of our church community to help build a "Bridge to the Future." During the last 2 months, a team of more than 20 stewards led concentrated outreach efforts to connect with all of the members of this congregation. The team engaged with more than 200 congregants during this year's campaign, through in-person visits before we all were sequestered at home, as well as virtual check-ins through Zoom, FaceTime, Skype, etc. We also contacted close to 75 friends of the church and invited them to contribute to our community, too.

At the close of April, the great majority of members renewed their financial commitment to the church by submitting a formal pledge. These pledges totaled more than \$380,000 and were donated by more than 130 pledging households, which represents more than 200 members and friends. Sixteen new members joined in this year's campaign, and more than half of congregants increased their pledge from last year to this year. THANK YOU, UUCSS fellow congregants. As a result of your generosity and commitment to the financial sustainability of our church, we're close to 90 percent of our draft budget for 2020–2021. The proposed budget includes monies for new ministerial and building maintenance expenses, among other necessities. In the coming weeks, we'll be contacting you as we seek to supplement pledges in order to come even closer to meeting our budget needs.

If you have not yet pledged, it is not too late for members or friends to make a gift to the church in the form of a new or renewed pledge. Please pledge online at uucss.org/abd/pledge.

A big THANKS go out to the fantastic stewardship team: **Tina Borrer, Tamara Bowman, Lynn Cave, Laura Ellis, Dorothy & Larry Hale, Maggie Hayes, Jane Jackson, Margo Kelly, Jiwon Kim, Robin Moore Lasky, Mary Beth Lerner, Nicole Levesque, Bruce McConachie, Bobbi Pohl, Dina Raley, Kandra Strauss-Riggs, Dave & Jen Sheppard, Scott Sleek, Fred Teal, and Elissa Webber.** An additional shout-out to those who volunteered to share their testimonials: **Scott Sleek, Ashley Holt, Fred Teal, and Robin Moore Lasky.** And a special appreciation to Scott, again, for designing and publishing this year's "sleek" ABD brochure.

THE 8TH PRINCIPLE, UUCSS, AND YOU

At the Annual Meeting this June, the Board will put forward a resolution to use the coming year to engage in deep study and mindful reflection about what adopting the 8th Principle means for our congregation. If the resolution passes, we all would commit to working with an 8th Principle Task Force to explore how adopting the 8th Principle could strengthen our unique church structures, cultures, and processes, with the goal to bring the 8th Principle to a congregational vote in June 2021.

Wait, I know about our 7 Principles. What's the 8th Principle?

Introduced at the 2017 UUA General Assembly, the 8th Principle is as follows:

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.

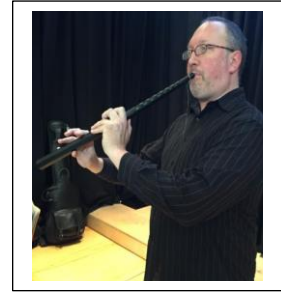
Learn more at <http://tiny.cc/8PTF> or email racialjusticetaskforce@uucss.org.

IFCMW/WIROC Day of Unity Event

The Interfaith Council of Metropolitan Washington, in partnership with the Washington Interfaith Response and Outreach Coalition, will be sponsoring *No Hate in the DMV: Breaking Down Harmful Stereotypes*. This event will take place online Sunday, May 3, from 2:00–3:30 p.m. as one of several IFC's sponsored Day of Unity events. If you're interested in attending, please [register](#) here.

Musings by Michael Holmes, UUCSS Music Director

After our world turned upside down, and people in every profession scrambled to learn how to sustain their jobs remotely, musicians took a huge hit, for obvious reasons. The truth is that nothing can adequately replace the experience of live music. Nevertheless, musicians persisted! From the get-go, so many church musicians around the world have joined to transmit their message “virtually.” The result, even though initially exhausting, frustrating, and daunting at times, still provided them with the opportunity to learn new skills and to get really creative. It goes without saying that without music, any church would be without one of its most important spiritual lifelines. The music volunteers at UUCSS have joined me willfully and have proven that they understand this mission of music ministry, and on a deep level.



I’m often asked what goes into “virtual” online musical performance. Sometimes, it appears that people are performing together in real time, as has been the illusion displayed by virtual choir and orchestra videos that have suddenly exploded in the past 2 months. Certainly, solo artists (instrumentalists, or singers who accompany themselves) are simply recording themselves on basic video. But when a project involves more than one musician in two places remote from each other, it suddenly becomes a technology project that’s part recording studio and part musical performance. The short version is that these musicians are organized by a project manager who syncs together everyone’s individual tracks on an audio or video/audio program.

These projects can be fun, but when hours in the day are limited, they also can be a labor of love. I sincerely hope that our process of bringing these webcast services to everyone will become easier and more efficient as we go along. So many people are learning some skills that they may never have imagined taking the time to learn...myself included. I am seeing lots of silver linings in this, though we all know that it is not a sustainable model for the long haul. When we survive this horrible pandemic, I know that we will be stronger and more resilient, and we will never be the same. Just to cite one example, our new UUCSS YouTube channel (under the church’s name) is the beginning of something really wonderful for the purposes of outreach. For now, I am considering the glass half full, and carrying on!



LEARN

Message From Interim Director of Religious Education (IDRE) Marsha Thrall



In the few short months since I arrived in Maryland, it seems as if a whirlwind of change and transition has been happening all around us. From adapting to doing Religious Education in a different way, to doing worship in a “learn as we go” virtual space, as we work to keep our families and communities safe, to this present and much anticipated space of candidating a new, settled minister, it seems that unpredictability is almost the norm within the church space that is UUCSS.

For me, one of the constants, and a source of stability during this whirlwind of time and space, has been having Michael Knaapen as the staff leader for Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUUs), and as my ever-ready, always helpful and loyal assistant. The fact that Mike is from Wisconsin, and understands Wisconsin-ese, has been an added blessing.

And it is because of these things, and so many more wonderful things that are Mike K., that it is very difficult to write what I’m about to write.

LEARN (continued)

Message From Interim Director of Religious Education Continued

Though it has been much anticipated, and has been held a secret since February, the news became official on April 20, 2020, when Michael Knaapen submitted his letter of resignation to the Vice President of Personnel here at UUCSS. Mike's last day with UUCSS will be June 30, 2020. There are no words to express how much I value Mike's brilliance, strong work ethic, and most important, his deep love and affection for the families at UUCSS. Mike K's contribution to Religious Education at UUCSS will be missed by so many.

Work has been done to determine how the next RE staff member will best serve the community at UUCSS, and information regarding this updated position will be announced soon. In the meantime, look forward to important information in the coming weeks about summer activities for children and youth at UUCSS, and also information regarding Children's and Youth Religious Education programming for the 2020–2021 church year.

Thank you, dear families, members, and friends for all of the ways in which you enrich Religious Education at UUCSS.

Virtual Sunday Morning RE Scheduling for Children and Youth

Until May 31, or until it is safe to begin gathering in person at the UUCSS campus again—whichever comes first—we will continue to gather, by age group, via Zoom on Sunday mornings. The links for these online meetings are as follows:

Pre-K Through Second Grade (Sundays at 10:00 a.m.) using this login:

<https://zoom.us/j/939539447?pwd=SSSt5bWE3eWZVUUtidEZ3dnppOHN1Zz09>

Meeting ID: 939 539 447

Password: 794757

Third Grade Through Fifth Grade (Sundays at 10:30 a.m.) using this login:

<https://zoom.us/j/361463329?pwd=YIFZT3ZaRmlNTVlVDZPRmE2bWxFdz09>

Meeting ID: 361 463 329

Password: 590410

Middle School (Sundays from 12:30 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.) using this login

<https://zoom.us/j/908489207?pwd=M0Y4Q3FpU1ZSTFRabUpiczA3ZC9ZZz09>

Meeting ID: 908 489 207

Password: 356402

Coming of Age—With Linda Barrett and Carey Schneider

<https://zoom.us/j/764479475>

Meeting ID: 764 479 475

YRUU Virtual Check-ins are scheduled by Michael Knaapen. Mike K. will forward Zoom information to the YRUU group prior to virtual YRUU check-ins.

Wednesday and Friday Check-in Information

Third Grade Through Fifth Grade (Wednesdays from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.) These are game-themed check-ins, and for our next meeting on April 22, 2020, we will be playing Pictionary with Mike K. The log-in information is:

<https://zoom.us/j/493813376?pwd=VTc0aGtzYzFnWEN5VEVrLzlvUnFZdz09>

Meeting ID: 493 813 376

Password: 435472

LEARN (continued)

Message From Interim Director of Religious Education Continued

Middle School (Fridays from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.) This check-in is a Free for All; participants are encouraged to bring their best, most entertaining videos and other media to share with the group. The log-in information is:

<https://zoom.us/j/161903717?pwd=MmUxeU11aUd4NEF0bk9OakRJdGIKQT09>

Meeting ID: 161 903 717

Password: 001020

Adult Religious Education

Here at UUCSS, we've been blessed with the exceptional volunteer leadership of Evelyn DeNardo, as we continue to explore what Adult Religious Education could look like within the congregation. Despite social distancing, Evelyn has agreed to continue to work toward virtually facilitating the UU Ethics course she launched in the beginning of February. If you are interested in the Ethics Workshops, please contact Evelyn at denardo.evelyn@gmail.com for information regarding participation.

CONNECT

Bylaws Revision Task Force (RevCon) Update

After many months of researching, drafting and re-drafting, sharing information with the congregation, receiving questions and comments, and serious deliberating, the RevCon Task Force presented a final version of proposed Bylaws to the Board. At its meeting April 22, the Board approved those proposed Bylaws for presentation to UUCSS members at the Annual Meeting on June 7. A vote of two-thirds of members of 6 months' standing is required by the current Constitution to replace it with the new Bylaws. Here's a link to the final version:

[\[https://drive.google.com/open?id=13WoGXx1k39Xujq5fbuZ7U53iWYNKaQzI\]](https://drive.google.com/open?id=13WoGXx1k39Xujq5fbuZ7U53iWYNKaQzI).

Informed but not bound by our church's history, the proposed Bylaws incorporate best UU practices, particularly provisions promoting inclusion, while deleting details that will be addressed through Board policies. The Board's new "policy on policies" will ensure that those policies are revised or developed with input from the congregation.

Task Force members (**Maggie Hayes, Susannah Numa, Jo Paoletti, and John Roberts**) are grateful to so many of you who have helped us bring our governing document into the 21st century. Guidance from Rev. Lyn, input from present and past Board members and other leaders, suggestions from many members, and contributions from experts among us—all are deeply appreciated. And we're still available for questions or comments at revcon@uucss.org.

Capital Improvements Committee Update

Although our church campus has been closed, the UUCSS Capital Improvements Committee has remained on the job. Since January when the committee deemed it necessary to rebid the project to lower costs, we have spoken to and reviewed the details of our Request for Proposals (RFPs) with roughly 10 firms.

Over the last few weeks, we've met with two firms that will be submitting bids by the end of the month. When the bids are received, the committee will evaluate the offerings and make a recommendation to the Board. While there is some uncertainty when the project would start due to COVID-19, both firms understand the desire to start this work as soon as possible.

Questions? Contact our team at capitalimprovements@uucss.org.

CONNECT (continued)

2020–23 UUCSS Strategic Plan and Zoom Talk-Back Sessions May 10

During the 2018–2019 church year, UUCSS developed its first rolling strategic plan, for the three church years beginning in July 2019. Around April 24, the second three-year rolling strategic plan was emailed to the congregation. The new strategic plan is a synthesis of input provided directly by the Board, the committees on the Program Council, the committees on the Operations Council, and other organizations in the church that will be implementing the actions with the help of the congregation. It is an articulation of our goals for the next three church years (starting in July 2020), the actions we will take toward achieving those goals, and the measurable outcomes and other indicators we will use to evaluate our progress.

The goal of a strategic plan is to set priorities, focus our energy and resources, and strengthen and better coordinate our actions. The three-year timeline allows us to focus on near-term, achievable actions toward our goals, while still engaging in long-term planning (Year Two) and maintaining a longer-term vision (Year Three). UUCSS groups made a great deal of progress toward implementing the actions from last year's plan. Groups were offered the opportunity to submit self-evaluations for the current year, and these progress reports are attached in the appendix of the document. The Board will be voting on the new 2020–2023 strategic plan at its May meeting.

A Zoom session is scheduled for Sunday, May 10, for the purpose of discussion of the 2020–2023 Strategic Plan. The meeting will begin at 1:30 p.m. to allow for a lunch break after our online church service and Coffee Hour. We expect it to end by 2:30 p.m.

Important: If you plan to attend the meeting, RSVP to StratPlanning@uucss.org by Friday, May 8, at 5:00 p.m. so we can send you the access information from Zoom.

If you have any questions about the 2020–2023 strategic planning matrix or meeting, email the task force at StratPlanning@uucss.org.

Pathways to Membership: Spiritual Autobiography May 7, 7:00 p.m. via Zoom

In the next module of the online Pathways to Membership class, **Rev. Lyn Cox** will be facilitating a “spiritual autobiography” module for prospective and new members who have not yet completed the Pathways to Membership class. This is a loosely structured group exercise in remembering your religious and spiritual experiences from childhood to now, and sharing a little bit about your journey with the group. Please RSVP to **Mary Beth Lerner** at bclarke10@comcast.net.

UUing the Vote in the Time of COVID-19 Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

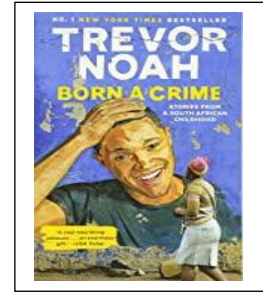
In spite of the restrictions caused by the COVID-19 virus, we believe it is time to seize the moment and take strong action to shape the November election. Our goal is to enlist Maryland UUs in a sustained effort to increase the numbers of people voting for candidates who support our values and positions on issues. We ask that you join us in this important effort.

We know that many Maryland congregations are already working on UU the Vote activities, and we are asking local leaders to join our team to help coordinate and support efforts throughout the state (and in neighboring states as well) by filling out this [congregational survey](#). You can join our Democracy Task Force [here](#), to get plugged into what is happening, help guide our work, and provide messaging, materials and support for congregations. You can join our Facebook group [here](#). *Please note, you may have to like our page before you can join the group.* Facebook groups are a good way for you to share events, articles and happenings in your congregational area.

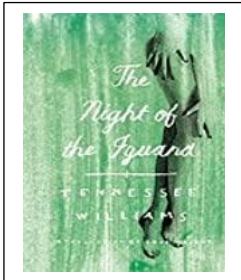
CONNECT (continued)

WOMEN'S BOOK GROUP

The women's book group meets on the fourth Monday of the month at 7:30 p.m. for a casual gathering and book discussion. No long-term obligation is required. All interested readers are welcome to join us. For now, we are meeting via Zoom. Please contact **Deborah Weiner**, dweiner04@gmail.com, for additional information. On May 27, we will discuss *Born a Crime*, by **Trevor Noah**.



Men's Book Group



We are reading *The Night of the Iguana* by **Tennessee Williams** and will also view the 1964 movie. We will meet to discuss the book at 7:00 p.m. on Sunday, May 17, by Zoom unless the pandemic has lifted, in which case we will meet at the home of **Bruce McConachie** at 7231 Windsor Lane Hyattsville, MD 20782. Free PDF versions of the script are available online. If you are interested in joining the group, contact **Richard Lorr** (rlorr4@gmail.com), get the book, and come to the next meeting. Hope to see you there!

Lobbying MD Legislators on Climate Change Bills

Thanks to everyone who wrote letters and/or drove with us to Annapolis to lobby the General Assembly in Maryland on climate change bills. As you may recall, your Green Sanctuary Committee was pushing to pass eight different bills on several issues of climate change. None of the bills had been passed when our Maryland legislators abruptly adjourned in mid-March because of the pandemic.



We have learned from CCAN (the Chesapeake Climate Action Network) and the Sierra Club that nearly all of the legislation to be considered by the Maryland General Assembly when they reconvene at the end of May or June for a special session will focus on the state's response to the COVID-19 crisis. Accordingly, both organizations are suggesting that we push to pass the one bill they believe still has a chance in the short session: funding the Transit Safety and Investment Act.

The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), which includes the Metro and MARC systems, light rail, and all MTA buses, has been underfunded for years. It provides daily transportation for many first responders and necessary service providers who must continue to work in our mostly closed economy. Besides providing necessary transport, these modes of transportation are already low polluters of CO2 compared to cars. You can get more information about this campaign on the CCAN website, chesapeakeclimate.org.

When the date for the short legislative session is announced, please write to your Representatives and/or your Senator to thank them for their work on stopping the pandemic in Maryland, and ask them to be sure to vote for House Bill 368 or Senate bill 424, the Transit Safety and Investment Act.

Thanks, **Bruce McConachie**
Green Sanctuary Committee

Community Partner of the Month: The Mid-Atlantic Innocence Project

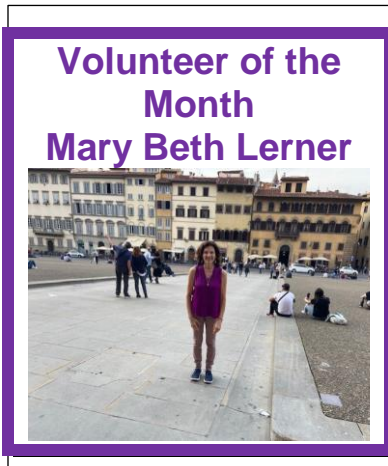


The Mid-Atlantic Innocence Project (MAIP) works to prevent and correct the conviction of innocent people in DC, Maryland, and Virginia. They have one of the highest success rates in the country for exonerating those who have been wrongfully accused.

The people who come to MAIP for help usually have nowhere else to turn. Many have been convicted of terrible crimes and are despised and ignored by society despite their innocence. Often, they have never had competent legal representation. MAIP gives hope to people who feel that they are out of options. MAIP knows how difficult correcting wrongful convictions is, which is why they also work to prevent them in the first place. They have helped pass 14 laws that would prevent or make it easier to stop wrongful convictions.

Since the project began in 2000, MAIP has helped to secure the release or exoneration of 36 men in the DC, Maryland, and Virginia region. These men spent a total of 708 years in prison—years that were not spent with their children and families. For more information on MAIP, visit the Project's website: <https://exonerte.org>.

During May, you will be able to make a gift to MAIP through the Give+ Mobile app. Once you have set up your account and designated UUCSS as your congregation, select "special collections" to give to our community partner of the month.



Mary Beth Lerner grew up in a household committed to social justice, or as she put it, "it was the air I breathed." For many years, social justice work took a back seat to an acting career in New York, followed by teaching high school English and raising three children in the DC area. Attending an anti-racist Jubilee training at all Souls UU in DC was a profoundly meaningful experience that created a desire for more. Luckily, her commute to yoga practice took her right by UUCSS. After attending for a few months, she became a member in 2017 and quickly joined our Racial Justice Task Force. This is Mary Beth's touchstone, a place for becoming whole and working toward Beloved Community. She is especially excited about the upcoming work on the 8th Principle and supporting that work in whatever she can.

While racial justice is her primary driver, Mary Beth has worked extensively in other areas. She is active in the Defending Democracy Task Force. She is currently co-chair of the Membership Committee. She works on **Dorothy Hale's** Sunday support team, has been an Annual Budget Drive steward, and helped out at the auction. A particularly meaningful activity has been participating in Soul Matters, a group that goes deeper into monthly worship topics. In the current crisis, she is working with UUCSS Outreach helping those of us in need. When asked why she volunteers, Mary Beth said that volunteering started out as a way to meet people but soon evolved into an opportunity for learning and growing from the amazing people at UUCSS; expanding her knowledge of UUism and UUCSS; and stretching herself, sometimes in very uncomfortable ways, while deepening spiritually, ethically, and personally. We are all glad she stopped by on her way to yoga class.

CONNECT (continued)

EVENTS IN BRIEF

MAY 1, 3:00–4:00 p.m. Afternoon tea with Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt. Reservation required; sign up at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0b4aafa92fa3fb6-afternoon>.

MAY 2, 6:30–7:30 p.m. Happy hour with Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt. Reservation required; sign up at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0b4aafa92fa3fb6-afternoon>.

MAY 3, 12:00 noon–1:00 p.m. Congregational vote via Zoom.

MAY 3, 2:00–3:30 p.m. IFCMW/WIROC Day of Unity Event. Please [register](#) here.

MAY 7, 7:00 p.m. Online Pathways to Membership—Spiritual Autobiographies. RSVP to Mary Beth Lerner at membershipchairs@uucss.org.

MAY 10, 1:30 p.m. 2020–2023 Strategic Plan and Zoom Talk-Back Sessions. RSVP to StratPlanning@uucss.org by 5:00 p.m. Friday, May 8, to receive Zoom access information.

JUNE 7. Congregational Meeting. Details to follow.

JUNE 20. Mass Poor People's Assembly and Moral March on Washington. Go to <https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/> for details and registration for more information and on how the event will now be held online.

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE

The Church buildings are closed during this pandemic, and the Church Administrator is working remotely from home for the near future, but is able to answer church emails and phone calls remotely when you use the usual email address (administrator@uucss.org) and phone number (301-434-4050).

Church mail may be picked up in the foyer of the Administration building. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

I hope everyone is safe, well, and keeping busy during this period of pandemic.
Melinda Yalom Church Administrator





UUCSS

Unitarian Universalist Church of Silver Spring

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FIRST CLASS

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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.

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.

Church website: www.uucss.org