

December 2020

Uniter



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF SILVER SPRING
10309 New Hampshire Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20903
301-273-9745 · Fax 301-434-4051
www.uucss.org

In this Issue...

WORSHIP SERVICES

INSPIRE

[Minister's Column by Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt](#)

[Message From Carl Miller, Board President](#)

[Musings by Michael Holmes, Music Director](#)

LEARN

[Religious Education Activities--for Children and Adults](#)

[Youth Religious Education](#)

[Adult Religious Education Offerings](#)

CONNECT

EVENTS

[Annual UUCSS Auction](#)

[Committee Updates](#)

[Volunteer of the Month](#)

[Charity of the Month](#)

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

WORSHIP SERVICES

**Music begins at 10:30 AM / Service at 11:00 AM
Zoom Coffee Hour at 12:00 PM**

How to Join Worship

- A. Join the Livestream by visiting the church's [YouTube](#) page at
- B. Join the sign language interpretation on [Zoom](#)
- C. Attend virtual coffee hour on [Zoom](#)

Having trouble tuning in for worship?

Please email administrator@uucss.org
with your name and phone number to be connected with a volunteer who can help.

December 6: Watching and Waiting, Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

What do baby chicks and the apocalypse have in common? Join us for this Advent service to find out!

December 13: Maccabees, Menorahs, & the Miracles of Hanukkah, Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

This week in worship we will contemplate Hanukkah's mysteries and rededicate ourselves to being servants of light and goodness.

December 20: Honoring the Dark, Calling Back the Light, Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

The Winter Solstice is a time to journey inward and reflect on the lessons, joys, and sorrows from the past year. It is also a time to honor the dark and call back the light. Join us for a service of readings, reflection, songs, stillness, and ritual in honor of the Solstice.

December 24 Christmas Eve, 7:00 pm. Prelude at 6:30 pm: A Christmas Like No Other, Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

This night may not be so silent, but it will certainly be holy when we gather together to recall the Christmas story and consider what it means for us in these strange times. In our one virtual Christmas Eve service this year, we will hear sacred scripture, modern poetry, special music by our fabulous choir, a Christmas homily, sing lots of carols, and light candles.

December 27: Jazz Service for the New Year, Presented by Jazz@UUCSS

The Elijah Balbed jazz combo will provide some first class jazz recorded (safely) in our sanctuary! Let us celebrate hope for a brighter 2021 in style!

January 3: Starting Anew, Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

Each New Year represents a new beginning, a new chance to align ourselves more closely with our sense of purpose and meaning. This week we will share in a ritual to help us let go of all we do not wish to carry with us from 2020, and we will dream together about what we hope for in the year to come.

INSPIRE

Minister's Column by Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt



When I was 21, I moved to England with two friends as part of a work abroad program. My friends had families who paid to fly them home for the holidays, but I was stuck on a continent away from everyone I loved and painfully lonely. Thankfully, I was able to get together on Christmas Day with some of the people I'd met in our very first hostel in London. All of us were homesick, but we decided to feast anyway, and we celebrated by each making a holiday dish from our country of origin. It was a Christmas like no other, and while I remember it pretty fondly now, if I could rewrite history, I'd go back and spend that Christmas at home with my family.

Our worship theme for this month at church is "stillness." In some ways this feels a bit like telling a starving person to take on fasting as a spiritual practice. Many of us are faced with more stillness than we know what to do with these days. But, what if we engage stillness instead as bringing a halt not to the things that bring you joy but to the things that keep you from it? Or, as Jan Richardson writes in her poem "Blessing in the Chaos":

*Let there be
an opening
into the quiet
that lies beneath
the chaos,
where you find
the peace
you did not think
possible
and see what shimmers
within the storm.*

In many ways this is going to be a holiday season like no other. It may feel lonely. It may not include things we look forward to each year. Our holiday services will be different through a computer screen. And yet, I hope we all choose to do what my international friends and I did back in London the Christmas of 2004 and feast anyway. Polish that menorah even if you'll be the only one gazing at its Hanukkah lights this year. Make that Yule wreath, put up the Christmas tree even if you and your spouse will be the only ones to enjoy it. Fry up the latkes, bake the Yule log cake, heat up the eggnog, cue up the worship YouTube and feast anyway. Hold onto what shimmers within the storm and find safe ways to share it with others. For even when things are hard and scary, love and hope, peace and joy are being born in us and with us and through us.

Wishing you and yours every blessing this month and always.

Message From Carl Miller, Board President



The year 2020 has had quite a storyline. If it were a script for a movie, I might say it was a little overwritten. It's quite a tangle of emotions, but it is great to have this community when trying to hold it all.

UUCSS co-hosted a Jubilee Anti-Racism Training workshop on November 13-15. We are very grateful to Lutricia Callair, Paula Cole Jones, and Leon Spencer for an intense workshop which took us through American history, personal experiences, and open group sharing. Empathetic pain moves communities, and if we're diligent enough, perhaps the changes could be positive and lasting. The instructors pointed us to the recent report "Widening the Circle of

Concern," which is an introspective look at the UUA's current struggles with racial and spiritual wholeness. The report is available on the UUA website.

The board met in October to discuss church policy revisions, the annual budget drive, and our ever-evolving COVID-19 policies. At the next meeting we will be making plans for the holidays. (Some people, like me, who are usually not in Maryland during late December will actually get to watch UUCSS holiday services this year. Everything has a silver lining!) We will also talk about the UUA General Assembly in June 2021 (which — no surprise — is also going to be virtual).

So goes another chapter in life under the pandemic.

Tonight I was thinking back to all the fun things that Andrea and I did in the DC area in 2016, when we had just moved here and felt like tourists (the Kennedy Center, the Lincoln memorial, the Air & Space museum...). I wonder what it would be like to do some of those things again. I wonder how many "first time since the pandemic" moments there might be in the future.

If this were a movie, it might end like "Deep Impact." In that film, after the global existential crisis is averted and the world is saved, the U. S. president (Morgan Freeman) makes a stirring speech over uplifting music. "The waters receded. Cities fall, but they are rebuilt. ... Rejoice in what we have been re-given. Our planet, our home." And the credits roll.

Perhaps there will be an actual moment like that in the future. (Next year, maybe?) But, even if there is, I imagine that personal moments of renewal will count more — we're better at writing our own stories anyway. I hope this message finds you well.

What are the moments that you are most looking forward to after the pandemic? You're invited to share by commenting on the #ShareWithUs post found in the [UUCSS private Facebook group](#).

Musings by Michael Holmes, Music Director

I now have reserved Thursday evenings at 7:30 pm during the pandemic (through May) for us to listen to and discuss great Masterworks of Music--early and modern, Western and non-Western, along with living traditions such as Jazz, Folk, Rock, R&B, Pop, Soul, Gospel, and many other genres/musical cultures. The aim of this series is to help us stave off the pandemic isolation while being together and enriching our lives via exposure to great music.



Sessions will take place during what regularly would be our Thursday choir rehearsals, but it is open to all UUCSS members and friends. The first four sessions covered Beethoven and Progressive Rock, and the discussions were lively!

I look forward to seeing you in the many weeks to come!

For the schedule of topics, subject to change, please see the Events section.

For all interested, simply join the Zoom link below.

Weekly Zoom Meeting Link

<https://zoom.us/j/96529557241?pwd=OXFFVVJSNzdzTFZBcGxqcUwrNGNodz09>

Meeting ID: 965 2955 7241

Passcode: 725889

Sessions are being recorded and posted in the following shared drive folder for those who aren't able to attend. https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1koOPhE4fymAxchJfrz9Yn4NioZ_vZYIR?usp=sharing

LEARN

Religious Education Activities--for Children and Adults

Youth Religious Education

At UUCSS, we offer religious education for all ages. If you are not yet registered, you can do so for the following ages on our website at <https://uucss.org/children/>

- Pre-School (Ages 2-5) Parents of Preschoolers (POP!)
- Kindergarten through 1st Grade - "Love Surrounds Us" from Tapestry of Faith
- Grades 2 through 4 - "Love Will Guide Us" from Tapestry of Faith
- Grades 5 through 6 (Middle School A) - "Heeding the Call: Qualities of a Justice Maker" from Tapestry of Faith
- Grades 7 through 8 (Middle School B) - "Building Bridges: A World Religions Program" from Tapestry of Faith
- Grade 9 - Coming of Age (COA)
- Grades 10 through 12 - Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU)

Adult Religious Education Offerings

Soul Matters Monthly Conversation, led by Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

Sunday, December 6, 1:00 - 2:30 pm

Steve Garnaas-Holmes writes "When the merely important stops for what is beautiful, when we let a little sabbath interrupt our busyness, the holy enters in the empty spaces." This month we delve into the theme of "stillness" and will take time together to pause, to stop, to be still and see what fills the empty space. Everyone is invited to join in this conversation that follows a small group ministry approach. No need to register or sign up, you are welcome whether you can make it to all or just one of these monthly conversations. Links to each Zoom conversation will be available in the all-church emails.

Reading, Resilience, and Resistance, led by Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

Tuesday, December 1, 7:30 - 9 pm

Sunday, December 20, 1 - 2:30 pm

At our first gathering in November, we read from the writings of Howard Thurman. This month we will sink into the wisdom of womanist queer theologian, Pamela Lightsey, and activist poet, Audre Lorde. In this class we use a sacred reading approach to engage deeply with a text and explore what meaning it holds for us today. In these days when so much injustice is being laid bare, join us as we seek wisdom and inspiration from people who have persisted and found joy even while living through tumult and oppression. No need to register or sign up, you are welcome whether you can make it to all or just one of these monthly conversations. Links to each class will be available in the all-church email.

CONNECT

EVENTS

Recurring and committee events can also be found on the Church Calendar at: <https://uucss.org/calendar/>

Dec. 1, 7:30 - 9:00 pm. Reading, Resilience, and Resistance. With Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt.

Dec. 3, 7:30 pm. Masterworks of Music. Beethoven – Symphony No. 9 (one of the ultimate expressions of world peace).

Dec. 5, 7:00 pm. Online Auction Kickoff. Zoom link will be shared via all-church email.

Dec. 5 through Dec. 13. Auction Online Bidding Window.

Dec. 6, 1:00 - 2:30 pm. Soul Matters Monthly Conversation. With Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt.

Dec. 6, 7:00 pm. Men's Book Group. We are reading Wild Swans by Jung Chang, a family history, recounting the lives of three female generations in China. If you are interested in joining the group, contact Richard Lorr (rlorr4@gmail.com), get the book and the Zoom link, and come to the meeting!

Dec. 7, 7:30 - 10:00 pm. Online Men's Group.

Dec. 10, 7:30 pm. Masterworks of Music. Miles Davis: Kind of Blue (one of the three most important jazz albums ever released).

Dec.13, 7:00 pm. Online Auction Finale. Zoom link will be shared via all-church email.

Dec. 14, 7:30 - 10:00 pm. Online Men's Group.

Dec. 17, 7:30 pm. Masterworks of Music. Women in Music-Part 1: Hildegard of Bingen (first Western composer ever to sign authorship was a woman!).

Dec. 19, 2:00 - 4:00 pm. Holiday Drive Thru. UUCSS parking lot. Come share in some holiday cheer together with everyone at UUCSS. From the comfort and safety of your vehicle you will be able to enjoy a holiday light display, get goodie bags for the kids, and pick up your hand-held candles to light for our virtual Christmas Eve service. This event is not just for families and kids--everyone is invited to join in the fun!

Dec. 20, 1:00 - 2:30 pm. Reading, Resilience, and Resistance. With Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt.

Dec. 21, 7:30 - 10:00 pm. Online Men's Group.

Dec. 24. Christmas Eve Service. Prelude 6:30, Service 7pm.

Dec. 28, 7:30 pm. Women's Book Group. We are discussing Akin by Emma Donoghue. A long-term obligation is not required to join our discussions. Please contact dweiner04@gmail.com to be added to the next Zoom distribution for this reading group.

Annual UUCSS Auction



Hey there, ZOOperstars!
It's about time for the UUCSS
2020 Online Auction!

Saturday, December 5, 7 pm: Online Auction Kickoff
(Zoom link will be shared via all-church email.)

Sunday, December 13, 7 pm: Online Auction Finale
(Zoom link will be shared via all-church email.)

December 5 through December 13: Online Bidding Window

REMEMBER TO:

- Register to bid at: bit.ly/UURegistration (include credit card info for easy checkout)
- View Catalog at: bit.ly/UUAuctionCalendar
- Start bidding on December 5, 7 pm
- Finish bidding by December 13, 8 pm
- Pay one of these ways:
 - Credit card at end of auction (easiest way)
 - Check (write "Auction" in memo line)
 - GivePlus mobile app There are TWO Auction funds:
 - Auction Purchases (to pay for auction items you have won--Auction Purchase payments ARE NOT tax deductible)
 - Auction Donations (to DONATE money to the Auction--Auction Donation payments ARE tax deductible)

Note: Donors and bidders need to abide by UUCSS Covid-19 Safety Guidelines

If you have any questions about the auction, please email the Auction Team (Emily Harris, Linda Barrett, Emily Tien) at auction@uucss.org.

Committee Updates

UUCSS Defending Democracy Committee: Help Get Out the Vote in Georgia

The presidential election is past, but there are still two critical races left that will determine the control of the U.S. Senate. The state of Georgia, which has a widely documented history of voter suppression, will hold January 5 runoff elections for two U.S. Senate seats. On November 3, none of the candidates in the two races for those seats garnered the minimum 50% of the votes required by state law to win, so both races will be settled in runoffs. The deadline for Georgians to register to vote in the January 5 election is December 7. The UUCSS Defending Democracy Committee encourages you to help ensure robust participation in those elections. There are a variety of organizations that need help to maximize voter participation in Georgia. To learn how you can get involved, look under announcements on the church homepage or go to <https://bit.ly/3pH4Inj>.

Green Sanctuary

The Green Sanctuary hosted a successful composting talk on November 15 when Master Gardener Linda Barrett shared her knowledge and tips about home composting. Green Sanctuary raffled off 3 kitchen composters to inspire those new to composting to give it a try. The session was recorded and can be shared upon request by emailing Maureen.A.Malloy@gmail.com. Watch for for a spring composting session where we can compare results and prepare for a new year in the garden.

Montgomery County Councilmember Evan Glass has introduced legislation that will increase composting and mulching capacity in the county. The proposal will allow farmers to take an increased amount of food scraps and yard waste onto their farms for composting. As Councilmember Glass put it, "By encouraging more composting, we are helping our farmers, helping our residents, helping a greener economy and helping our planet." The public hearing for the legislation (ZTA 20-04) is scheduled for Tuesday, December 1, 2020. [Sign up here to testify in support.](#)

Racial Justice Task Force: UUCSS Hosts Jubilee: A Recap of the Weekend-Long UU Anti-Racism Training

UUCSS showed up in great numbers for a weekend-long anti-racism workshop, Jubilee, Nov 13-15. Thirty-six of the sixty Zoom boxes displayed faces from our Congregation, including six members of the Board. UUCSS co-hosted the event, along with the UU Congregations of Frederick and Columbia.

Jubilee was designed and lovingly facilitated by UUs Extraordinaires, Paula Cole Jones, Lutricia Callair, and Rev. Leon Spencer. It is an intense, moving, inspiring, and unsettling dive into how White supremacy is structured in US culture and institutions, including UU congregations.

Here are ways some of our members described the experience.

- By the end of Jubilee, I realized more than ever that empathy requires action. –Stephanie McConachie
- Jubilee was a weekend of deep, and sometimes painful sharing. It left me wanting to continue person-to-person dialogue with Black friends, able to be authentic and equal in the process of communicating life experiences, and where we go from here. –Beverly Schnetzler
- Jubilee was a great experience which helped me to feel connected to other people at UUCSS and [other] UU Congregations committed to racial justice. Deeply engaging with historical and present-day issues of racial inequity and violence deepened my resolve to keep doing this work. –Eli Briggs
- Jubilee is not a "feel good" opportunity to gather with like-minded people and congratulate ourselves on the good work we are doing to dismantle White supremacy. It is a beautiful gift of time and attention for authentic sharing, deep listening, and frank conversation about the history of White

supremacy and its effect on us all. Coming away from the weekend, I feel good and am re-committed to the hard, urgent work of racial justice. —Catherine Buckler

- Deep learning in my bones and heart.—Alexa Fraser
- We spent an intense weekend on Zoom learning and sharing the reality and effects of racism in America. I came away feeling a heightened need to work to combat racism in our country. It does not feel good to me that UUCSS has not yet accepted the 8th principle, and feel that the very least our church can do to show our contempt for racism in our country is to accept the 8th principle as our own. —Carolyn Savadkin
- Eye-opening, inspirational. — Maggie Hayes
- The weekend deepened my understanding of what we must do to fulfill the dream of a just and equitable world by showing up as a “Holy Disruptor” to build a community of communities. It was a life-changing weekend! It was so powerful I may attend it again. —Jan Kretz
- This was my second Jubilee anti-racism training and it was just as transformative, thought provoking, and inspiring as the first time. The program provides all the tools and support to learn, grow, and take action now to create much needed change. Every person should take this training. I'm so glad I did, twice. —Dina Raley

We will continue to reflect on what we've learned and how to incorporate our greater awareness into our relationships, culture, and structure here at UUCSS. We know this is the beginning of an important, and ongoing process as we work to build a Beloved Community here. If you missed the event, you will have another opportunity soon. The next Jubilee will be offered at All Souls on MLK Weekend.

If you'd like to hear more, please reach out to the Racial Justice Task Force at racialjusticetaskforce@uucss.org.

Volunteer of the Month

Eli Briggs

UU speak has many special touchstones, none more powerful than *spiritual home*. For many of us, a spiritual home is a place of repose and safety. For Eli Briggs, a spiritual home is a place where we are called to fulfill our purpose. She has fulfilled many roles since joining UUCSS in 1999--Worship Committee Chair, steward for the Annual Budget Drive, nursery volunteer, worship service presenter, leadership retreat planner, and a member of the UUCSS Board. But for the last five years, her primary purpose has been racial justice. Eli co-founded our Racial Justice Task Force (RJTF) in response to the Michael Brown slaying and her inability to explain to her daughter Olivia what had happened. RJTF has worked externally hard to advocate for examining Montgomery County's school catchment boundaries to promote equity and to address police-involved shootings of people of color. RJTF has also worked with us as a congregation to be more welcoming of people of color, to listen instead of talk, to feel instead of react, to grow in compassion. That work continues to this day as we approach an understanding of the proposed 8th Principle.

Recently, Eli joined our Leadership Development Committee (formerly the Nominating Committee). While this was originally in support of racial justice work it has evolved for her into giving voice to all of UUCSS' diversity. For Eli, we form a rich tapestry of backgrounds and experience and are stronger and better when everyone is involved. As an example as she talked about everyone pulling together to make virtual church work, she said “I am so proud of us sticking together. We're proving that the church is not the building, but the people.”

Charity of the Month

The Minister's Discretionary Fund

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. 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).

Generous donations this month will mean that larger grants may be available. If your family is having financial hardship due to the virus or for any other reason, please talk to Rev. Kristin about whether a grant from the MDF can help.

Donate to UUCSS by either (1) using the GivePlus mobile app and selecting Minister's Discretionary Fund or (2) send a check made out to UUCSS and write Minister's Discretionary Fund in the memo line.

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

Contacting Rev. Kristin

If you'd like to chat or have a pastoral visit, please go to www.calendly.com/rev-kristin-schmidt where you can schedule an appointment.

Office hours: Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, 8am-2pm. Emails are checked.

Day off: Monday

Writing day: Wednesday

Contact number for phone and text: 202-780-7164

Email: minister@uucss.org

Unitarian Universalist Church of Silver Spring

10309 New Hampshire Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20903

FIRST CLASS

**Staff and
Board President**

Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

Minister

minister@uucss.org

Michael Holmes

Music Director

musicdirector@uucss.org

Marsha Thrall

Interim Director of
Religious Education

idreuucss@gmail.com

Lindsay Cowett

Religious Education

REassistant@uucss.org

Church Administrator

administrator@uucss.org

Carl Miller

Board President

president@uucss.org

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

The next issue of the *Uniter* is in January 2021.

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.

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

Co-editors are **Lynn Cave** and **Becca Stucky**.

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**.