

September 2021

# 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](http://www.uucss.org)

*In this Issue...*

## WORSHIP SERVICES

### INSPIRE

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

[Message From Maggie Hayes, Board President](#)

### LEARN

[Message From Laura Solomon, Director of Spiritual Growth](#)

[Adult RE](#)

### CONNECT

#### EVENTS

[Committee Updates](#)

[The Year Ahead from the Racial Justice Task Force](#)

[Volunteer Spotlight](#)

[Community Partner of the Month](#)

## ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

# WORSHIP SERVICES

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

## How to Join Worship

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

## Having trouble tuning in for worship?

Please email [administrator@uucss.org](mailto:administrator@uucss.org)  
with your name and phone number to be connected with a volunteer who can help.

### **September 5: Righting Our Relationships**, Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

Whether it's the economy or the environment, our world is grappling with big challenges. This week, as many among and around us prepare to celebrate Rosh Hashanah, we will imagine together what's possible if we learn how to right our relationships with one another and the Earth that sustains us all.

### **September 12: Telling the Truth About War**, Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

As the country marks the 20th solemn anniversary of the attacks on 9/11 we gather for a service of mourning, singing, and remembering the impact of the wars that came after.

### **September 19: Water Ceremony--Deep River of Faith**, Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

Join us for a service of moving music, wisdom from mystic and theologian Howard Thurman, and our beloved annual Water Ceremony! This year we celebrate in two ways: in-person on Saturday, September 11 from 10-Noon (sign-up in all-church email) and virtually this Sunday. Please send pictures of yourself near water that's meaningful to you to [minister@uucss.org](mailto:minister@uucss.org) by September 14 and Rev. Kristin will include them in the service.

### **September 26: Beyond the Eye of the Beholder**, Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

The way we measure beauty varies across time, culture, and individuals, but human beings seem to instinctively try to protect things they think are beautiful. In this service we will explore what's possible when we choose to expand our ideas about what and who are beautiful.

# INSPIRE

## Minister's Column by Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt



Dear UUCSS,

We head into a fall that is shaping up very differently from what we might have expected just a few short months ago. Nevertheless, I'm excited about so many things ahead here at church! Some of our plans are adapted from those made before the Delta variant surge began, but others have taken shape thanks to updates to the COVID guidelines made by the Board at their August meeting. We will be returning partially to campus, but we will have to do things differently than before. Things will feel different. We are different. With that in mind, here are some of the things I'm looking forward to in the coming weeks and months:

After nearly a year and a half of pre-recording worship services I am pleased to share that we are now working toward live-broadcasting services from the Sanctuary. A skeleton crew of no more than 12 people will begin leading and broadcasting them from the Sanctuary as soon as Sunday, September 26. We are also exploring fun ways people could gather outside while tuning into the live broadcast. Also, our Music Director Michael Holmes and I have been in close communication about how to create safe opportunities for people to make music together and plan to utilize instrumental music as well as special singer's masks as we move forward. We will be sharing more about our worship and music plans in upcoming all-church emails and service announcements, so please stay tuned!

Dr. Laura Solomon, our new Director of Spiritual Growth, is hard at work getting to know people of all ages, and she's developed a survey to better understand the congregation's hopes and needs for religious education programming this year. The survey will be sent out in an all-church email and includes questions about religious education for children, youth, and adults. I encourage everyone to take it. You are also invited to join us for one of two RE feedback sessions: Wednesday, September 1 at 7:30pm on Zoom (link on the church calendar) and Sunday, September 5 at 3:00 at Wheaton Regional Park (playground side). It's been a pleasure to begin working with Laura and I look forward to the ministry of spiritual growth that emerges through her leadership together with so many of you!

In many ways we are entering a new season of experimentation and innovation in all areas of congregational life. Safety precautions mean we will need to do some things differently than before. Most areas of congregational life will probably feel different. You may feel different. And as we've already had to do so many times since the pandemic began, we may need to pivot and adapt yet again. So, as your staff and lay leaders share plans for programming in this newsletter and beyond, please keep in mind these are based on current UUA recommendations, the best judgment of our leadership in this moment, and that circumstances may call us to adjust yet again sometime in the future.

I don't know what the year ahead holds, except that it holds promise and possibility. I'm so excited to be starting my second year of ministry together with all of you and I look forward to all of the ways we will embody truth, love, and justice together.

In faith and affection,

*Rev. Kristin*

## Message From Maggie Hayes, Board President



I'm very pleased (really!) to be serving as your Board president during the 2021-22 church year. My reasons for accepting this challenging and rewarding job include my deep ties to the UUCSS community, my admiration and respect for Rev. Kristin and the staff she has assembled, and my trust in our current Board members and others in leadership positions in the church.

I'm particularly thankful that Emily Harris agreed to step into Stephanie McConachie's (very large) shoes as VP for Personnel, that Doneby Smith agreed to continue serving as Chair of the Program Council, that Susannah Numa is replacing Emily as our Secretary, and that Katie Kirk Haag is the new at-large member taking the spot Ken Iobst filled so well. Carl Miller, who admirably led us during a very tough year, will continue contributing as an at-large member. And I know I can count on more excellent service from Jean Snell, VP for Planning; Colin Riggs, VP for Finance; and Robin Moore Lasky, Chair of the Operations Council. What a great team!

"Embracing Possibility," the worship theme for September, is an apt motif for all of UUCSS's 2021-22 church year. The Board is already exploring and embracing many possibilities in addressing our priorities for the next ten months:

- We will do our best to support the efforts of Rev. Kristin and other leaders in making the transition to hybrid worship. We are constantly reviewing and revising our COVID-19 guidelines. As you've just read in Rev. Kristin's message, we're going ahead with live broadcasts from the Sanctuary, hopefully by September 26, and we'll soon be announcing other changes.
- We will explore creative ways for us to gather--in person, as much as possible. Staying connected with one another is essential to building and nurturing our Beloved Community and to the mental and spiritual health of us all.
- To fulfill the congregation's charge to the Board in the 8th Principle resolution adopted last June, we will be embracing ways to "center the work of dismantling racism and other oppressions in all the work we do as a Congregation and to develop ongoing and evolving methods to assess and report our progress."
- We will investigate possibilities for communicating more often and more directly with the congregation. We want to hear your ideas about how to "do church" better, whether through brief, accessible reports about our proceedings, town hall meetings, or break-out coffee hour groups (by Zoom or in the Triangle Room). We have already scheduled two coffee hour sessions--on August 29 and September 12. Plus, you can always reach us at [board@uucss.org](mailto:board@uucss.org).

I'll never forget Rev. Liz Maclay's admonition that members and friends who take on responsibilities aren't volunteering – they're serving the church! The Board policies we adopted in 2020-21 were designed to alleviate long-term volunteer burn-out and to facilitate new opportunities for others to serve the UUCSS community. Learn about an upcoming leadership training course in another article in this issue and stay tuned for many possibilities you might embrace to serve the church!

# LEARN

## Message From Laura Solomon, Director of Spiritual Growth



Oh My Goodness, HELLO UUCSS!

I am so very excited to be joining you as your new Director of Spiritual Growth. While the year ahead holds so much that is uncertain, it also holds so much potential for community, learning, and growth! I am looking forward to being with you through all of it so we can learn and grow and shape this community. I believe in our creativity and our drive to create loving, supportive, justice-seeking community, even in challenging times. I can't wait to see the ways we are able to do this, together.

My favorite part of congregational life is getting to know you--the members of the congregation. What are your passions, your talents, your fears? What are your quirks, your favorite things, your fascinations? What lights you up inside? What about the world enrages you? Who are you, who have you been, and who are you becoming? I can't wait to learn these things and more about each of you.

In the meantime, here's a bit about me:

- I live in Sykesville, MD, with my 10-month-old puppy named Maizel Roo. She has endless energy and could chase tennis balls for hours.
- I have two pet rats, Nova and Ginsburg. Maizel Roo thinks they're all friends, but Nova and Ginsburg feel less sure.
- Prior to going to seminary, I worked as a psychologist serving children and adolescents with developmental disabilities for about 8 years.
- I love reading young adult books--particularly books with queer characters--and I'm always looking for new recommendations.
- I graduated from Meadville Lombard Theological School in May 2021.
- When I was in middle school, I was part of the 4-H entomology club. I still love bugs and find them fascinating.

We have some upcoming opportunities to meet in person! Please mark your calendars for Saturday, September 11 from 10 am - 12 pm for the In-Person Water Ceremony! This will be such a lovely opportunity for us to meet in person as we gather together for the new church year.

Keep your eyes and ears peeled for some opportunities to meet together to talk about your hopes and dreams, wants and needs for Religious Education this year!

In the meantime, I invite you to email me and introduce yourself at [DSG@uucss.org](mailto:DSG@uucss.org). I can't wait to get to know you.

Fondly,

*Laura*

## Adult RE

### Reconnection Small Group Ministry

Many of us began the summer of 2021 expecting things to go back to some version of “normal,” but as we enter the fall, things still seem uncertain. Whether you’re anxious for yourself or your kids about the Delta variant, eager to stop hearing about the pandemic and just get on with life, or just want to connect more deeply with yourself or others at UUCSS, this small group ministry might be for you.

Small group ministry is a style of circle worship for small groups. It allows each person a chance to share, if they choose, and to be heard and held by the group. These sessions allow people to reconnect in gentle ways that invite them to share at the level they feel comfortable sharing. We will cover the topics of relationship, joy, resilience, connection/community, and interdependence over the course of five weekly sessions.

Participants should plan to attend all five sessions. This small group ministry is open to everyone in high school and older. We need at least 6 participants to move forward and will create an additional group if more than 10 sign up. To sign up, please send Rev. Kristin an email at [minister@uucss.org](mailto:minister@uucss.org) with “Reconnection SGM” in the subject line.

**When: Five Zoom Sessions on Tuesdays (9/7, 9/14, 9/21, 9/28, 10/5) 7:30-9:00 pm**

### Explore Your Leadership Style Four-Session Course on Leadership in a Faith Context

As we begin a new church year, are you ready to make new friends and get to know folks anew at UUCSS? Are you available to deepen your connection to our beloved congregation and explore how you can contribute more to our community? Do you want to grow or deepen your leadership skills? If so, we want to give members and friends an opportunity to explore their approach to leadership closer to home and are bringing leadership development programming to UUCSS.

For many years, we have asked members to step into volunteer roles without a lot of preparation. Some members have had the opportunity to attend leadership development training offered by the UUA through regional workshops, conferences, and General Assembly. As a first step towards intensifying the congregation’s commitment to leadership development, the board reconstituted the nominating committee to be the leadership development committee to be able to consider volunteer and leadership development more broadly with the congregation. With this in mind, Jean Snell and Carol Hamilton will be offering a four-session workshop on leadership. Using an abbreviated form of the UUA curriculum, *Harvesting the Power*, through this class congregants will:

- Explore your leadership and faith journey
- Consider how to shift from an individualistic to a collective mindset
- Differentiate between leadership and management and why it matters
- Examine how to maintain your personal boundaries to avoid burnout
- Investigate what constructive conflict looks like

*Who should attend:* All members and friends are welcome! Whether you are considering a volunteer role within the church, elsewhere in the community, or in your profession, or whether you are already involved in some aspect of church leadership--we would love to have you!

*When:* **Participants should commit to attending all four sessions scheduled for:**

- **Sunday, Oct. 3** Noon-2:30 pm, in person if possible - details TBD w/potluck lunch if possible, or via Zoom
- **Thursday, Oct. 21** 7-9 pm via Zoom
- **Thursday, Nov. 4** 7-9 pm via Zoom
- **Sunday, Nov. 21** Noon-2:30pm, in the Sanctuary if possible w/potluck lunch, or via Zoom

*How:* Go to: <https://forms.gle/UcZ6zhf2fnX4fA3UA>.

*Questions:* Email [ldc@uucss.org](mailto:ldc@uucss.org)



# CONNECT



## EVENTS

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

**September 1** 7:30 pm. RE Feedback session I. *Zoom*.

**September 5** 3:00 pm. RE Feedback session II. *Wheaton Regional Park (playground side)*

**September 6** 7:30 - 10:00 pm. Online Men's Group.

**September 7** 7:30-9 pm. Reconnection Small Group Ministry. *Zoom*.

**September 11** 10:00 am - 12:30 pm. In-Person Water Ceremony.

**September 12** 11:30 am. Coffee Hour with the Board. *Zoom*.

**September 13** 7:30-10:00 pm. Online Men's Group.

**September 14** 7:30-9 pm. Reconnection Small Group Ministry. *Zoom*.

**September 19** 7:00 pm. Men's Book Group. *A Swim in a Pond in the Rain in Which Four Russians Give a Master Class on Writing, Reading, and Life* by the Booker Prize Winner author George Saunders. Paired with iconic short stories by Chekhov, Turgenev, Tolstoy, and Gogol, the author's essays provide a deep exploration of what makes great stories work, how the mind itself works while reading, and how the reading and writing of stories make genuine connection possible. If you are interested in joining the discussion, contact [Richard Lorr](#) to get the Zoom link and come to the next meeting.

**September 20** 7:30 - 10:00 pm. Online Men's Group.

**September 21** 7:30-9 pm. Reconnection Small Group Ministry. *Zoom*.

**September 26** 9:00 am-1:00 pm. Church Yard Clean Up.

**September 27** 7:30 - 9:30 pm. Women's Book Group--*The Dutch House* by Ann Patchett. After a brief check-in, we have an open discussion of the book. One of us usually facilitates the wide-ranging conversation. It is informal and fun! Interested readers are welcome to join without a long-term obligation. Please contact [Deb Weiner](#) for further details and the Zoom link.

**September 27** 7:30 - 10:00 pm. Online Men's Group.

**September 28** 7:30-9 pm. Reconnection Small Group Ministry. *Zoom*.



## Committee Updates

### **The Year Ahead from the Racial Justice Task Force**

We begin our new church year as an 8th Principle Congregation, becoming the 97th Congregation to do so. Hurrah to all of us!! We thank you for taking this step together.

Last year, we explored what it might mean to consider antiracism work as part of our central Principles, as part of our spiritual journey. We committed to create and sustain a Beloved Community and to dismantle racism accountably in ourselves and our institutions.

This year, we begin that work together. We plan to start with a guide created for the UUA: [Widening the Circle of Concern](#). The authors of this report were charged to "conduct an audit of the power structures and analyze systemic racism and white supremacy culture within the Unitarian Universalism Association," and they've created an overview of all layers of our faith and institutions. While the report is written about the national association, much of what is discussed applies to us at a Congregational level as well. The UUA Board has committed to review this report together over this year. The Racial Justice Task Force will also offer opportunities for the rest of us to dig in, review, and consider how these recommendations apply to us.

We will also be available to sit down with committees and groups within UUCSS to start imagining what it might mean to see this work through the lens of the 8th Principle. Over the past years, the Racial Justice Task Force and 8th Principle Task Force have developed relationships with congregations across the nation who have adopted the 8th Principle, so we won't be doing this work alone.

Finally, we are committed to engaging in this work with love and compassion. We know that to do the work of dismantling racism, we need to pace ourselves, and attend to our relationships with each other. Our work is urgent, yet it must be grounded in relationship and self-care, if we are to see it through.

We are excited for the year ahead.

## Volunteer Spotlight

### Dina Raley



Dina Raley never quite fit in the Catholic church of her upbringing. It had always seemed forced, superficial, and unwelcoming. Most other churches seemed no different and so there was no attraction to religion. What changed was a realization that a church could provide community and be an outlet for social justice activism. She then did what any logical person would do and Googled “liberal church.” Careful review of the search results showed a strong correlation to Unitarian Universalism. She and her husband, Todd, first fetched up at Paint Branch UUC but found it a little small with fewer outlets for activism. Shopping around, UUCSS seemed more of what they were looking for in a welcoming, authentic, and inclusive community.

Like so many others, Dina signed the book after attending her first Women’s Retreat and has not looked back. Things she likes about UUCSS include the Coming of Age and YRUU services, the auction, and, of course, the Women’s retreat. She recently stepped down as our Membership Committee chair, where she gave new members the same warm welcome she received. For her, UUCSS has been a place where she could feel free and held to try things, make mistakes, and learn to become a better person--a goal we all can share. When not in Zoom meetings, Dina likes to travel, golf, and spend time with her Covid-cats, Pierogi and Cannoli.

*Here are the Volunteers Spotlights from the Summer while the Uinter was on hiatus:*

**July:** [Margo Kelly](#)

**August:** [Teresa Meeks](#)

## Community Partner of the Month

### Afghan Women’s Fund

Generosity is an important spiritual practice for Unitarian Universalists, and one we invite everyone to practice when making a pledge and when making offerings during Sunday services. We also strive to practice generosity as a whole community by giving a portion of the offerings we collect each month to a Community Partner organization whose work furthers our values, whether around the corner and around the globe. While we had originally planned to partner with another organization for the month of September, the escalating humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan calls us to shift our support to a partner with connections there.

Afghan Women’s Fund is currently working with immigration attorneys to help their volunteers in Afghanistan whose lives are in danger because of their dedicated work supporting the rights of women and girls. Four Afghan members of the organization have already been violently attacked in recent days and many more are in hiding, in fear for their safety. The work of these Afghans in education and on behalf of women and girls places them in danger now that the Taliban is in power.

Our gifts will go toward the emergency evacuation and asylum support for the 50 volunteer members of the Afghan organization who are in danger because of their work supporting the organization’s educational and vocational women’s programs. Please keep the important work of the Afghan Women’s Fund in mind when making your financial offerings this month.

# ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

## Contacting Rev. Kristin--UPDATED

**Worship:** Sunday

**Writing day:** Monday

**Office hours:** Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, 10am-4pm. Emails are checked.

**Day off:** Friday

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

Email: [minister@uucss.org](mailto:minister@uucss.org)

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

## Meet the New *Uniter* Co-Editor Caroline Stauss



I am originally from White Oak, MD, but have spent most of my adulthood outside of the DC area (Baltimore, Netherlands, Oregon). Most of my 15-year professional experience is teaching Humanities subjects in all age groups, and my writing experience is mostly academic, but I've also written copy for a radio station in Ghana. I have attended UU services since 2014 and UUCSS since 2019, where I've mostly participated in choir. I became eligible to sign the book at UUCSS last year after taking online classes with interim minister Lyn Cox, but I will finally have the chance to sign the book this September! I also enjoy hanging out with my partner, Dan, and our cat and dog (Ida Tarbell and Bodie), watching international films, traveling, karaokeing, hiking, and doing pub trivia.

**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](mailto:minister@uucss.org)

**Michael Holmes**  
Music Director  
[musicdirector@uucss.org](mailto:musicdirector@uucss.org)

**Dr. Laura Solomon**  
Director of Spiritual Growth  
[DSG@uucss.org](mailto:DSG@uucss.org)

**Lindsay Cowett**  
Religious Education  
[REassistant@uucss.org](mailto:REassistant@uucss.org)

**Philip Browne**  
Church Administrator  
[administrator@uucss.org](mailto:administrator@uucss.org)

**Maggie Hayes**  
Board President  
[president@uucss.org](mailto:president@uucss.org)

Submissions are due by the 17th of the prior month.  
**Uniters** are published monthly September-June by the Unitarian  
Universalist Church of Silver Spring.

Send information and visuals to [uniter@uucss.org](mailto:uniter@uucss.org).

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

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

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

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