

February 2022

Uniter



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF SILVER SPRING
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WORSHIP SERVICES

February 2022 Worship

Due to the severe spike in COVID cases in the Washington, DC, area UUCSS continues offering all-virtual services until further notice. Please visit our YouTube page (<https://www.youtube.com/c/UUCSS>) on Sundays at 10:30 am and click on the Live Premiere to tune into worship (prelude begins at 10:00am). Or, you can just click the direct link in the Sunday morning all-church email reminder. We look forward to returning to hybrid services (offering both online and in-person in the Sanctuary) when the current COVID variant surge subsides.

February 6: Widening the Circle of Compassion, Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

This first Sunday of Black history month, please join us for the first in a month-long series of services inspired by the report of the UUA's Commission on Institutional Change. This week, as UUCSS gears up for our work with a refugee family from Afghanistan, we focus together on widening the circle of our compassion.

February 13: Widening the Circle of Our History, Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

This second in our February series of services inspired by the report of the UUA's Commission on Institutional Change is about broadening our understanding of our religious heritage as Unitarian Universalists.

February 20: Widening the Circle of Accountability, Michael Holmes, Music Director, with Special Guests

This third service in our series on Widening the Circle is about the ways we navigate inclusivity and multiculturalism in the songs we sing as a community. This week join Michael Holmes for a service about the intersection of the arts and accountability.

February 27: Widening the Circle of Concern, Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt with Special Guests

We conclude our month-long series with a service about the learning our Board and Program Council have begun in their study of the UUA's Commission on Institutional Change and how UUCSS can better live into our commitment to the 8th Principle.

INSPIRE

Minister's Column by Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt



Dear UUCSS,

When people become part of a congregation, I hope it's because they think both the community and the religious tradition of which that community is a part have something to offer them. There is wisdom that has been handed down through generations in this congregation, in sacred stories, RE classes, fellowship dinners, holidays, and holy days. But when people become part of us, they also have so much to offer us. Newcomers bring new perspectives, new skills, new preferences that will help shape this community into the future. In this way, congregations are meant to both shape the people who become part of them,

and the congregation is meant to *be shaped by them*.

Founder of the Center for Transformative Change, and author of [Being Black: Zen and the Art of Living With Fearlessness and Grace](#), the Rev. angel Kyodo williams puts it this way: "It's the community's job to figure out how we can stretch into the so-called margins to broaden our understanding and the ability to be inclusive. Inclusivity is not 'how do we make you a part of what we are?' but 'how do we become more of what you are?'"

While this is something I've heard preached from UU pulpits most of my life, it turns out it's a lot harder to actually put into practice than it is to just profess. It doesn't help that our institutions have white supremacy baked right into them. Acknowledging this challenge, the UUA pulled together a group of leaders called the Commission on Institutional Change a few years ago to study the impact that racism has had on UU congregations and institutions, and to provide recommendations for how we can dismantle those things that reinforce racism and other oppressions among us, those things that prevent us from becoming more of what our members and friends who aren't white are. The report that this Commission produced is titled "Widening the Circle of Concern."

Building on the important work this congregation did last year to learn about and then adopt the proposed 8th Principle, your Board and Racial Justice Task Force began a monthly study of this report last month. They are engaging in this study both to deepen their own learning as leaders of this community, and to identify concrete actions we can take as a community to make sure our structures help rather than hinder our work to "become more of what you are" with as wide a definition of "you" as we can imagine.

Since February is Black History Month, and the worship theme suggested by Soul Matters for is "Widening the Circle," I have chosen to center some of the themes lifted up in this report for our Sunday services this month. And even if you aren't a member of the Board, or the Racial Justice Task Force, you're invited along on the journey of study along with us. Here is the link to the Widening the Circle of Concern report, available for free on the UUA website: <https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/cic/widening>

Yours in faith, service, and lifelong learning,

Rev. Kristin

Message From Maggie Hayes, Board President



For most of us, this New Year isn't off to a "Happy" beginning. With the Omicron surge, crises in schools and health care, and wintry weather, as individuals we're again feeling overwhelmed, isolated, angry, and frustrated. If a church has feelings, UUCSS shares those unhappy ones. After holding a lovely in-person service on Christmas Eve, we had to shut down almost all in-person events. Recognizing the need for connections among our community members, our staff and lay leaders are reaching out, best we can. I hope you've been able to participate in one of the Zoom Check-In Conversations organized by Rev. Kristin and Dr. Laura. The 2022 Auction began and wrapped up

with virtual gatherings and gave us so many opportunities for socializing in the coming months. Expect phone calls or texts from fellow members checking in with you. Here's hoping the rest of 2022 will bring us all better times.

"Widening the Circle" is the worship theme for February. Rev. Kristin's message above recounts important background about the concept and the report of the UUA Commission on Institutional Change. Many UUs, including some in our community, have studied this report as a springboard for their efforts to adopt the proposed 8th Principle. In our resolution to adopt it last June, the Board was charged with centering the dismantling of racism and other oppressions in all our work. Dr. Laura and Rev. Kristin are now leading us and members of the Racial Justice Task Force in a monthly study group on the "Widening the Circle" report. Our first meeting was engrossing and provocative, especially (for me) the discussion of UU theology: how our decades-long emphasis on individual exploration and experience has reinforced the dominant culture in our congregations.

When I joined UUCSS, I considered myself an enlightened, non-racist, inclusive sort of person. Early on I attended an after-church meeting with a representative of Coming to the Table, an organization whose goal is to create a just and truthful society that acknowledges and seeks to heal from the racial wounds of the past. While I'd always been ashamed that my Southern ancestors had owned slaves, and that both my grandfathers had joined the KKK, I now had to acknowledge the privileges that white supremacy has given me. Later I had a conversation with a fellow member, in which I came to realize that a suggestion I had made struck that person as a condescending directive from a white person. My "spiritual journey" had begun.

Working closely with the Racial Justice Task Force, the RevCon group I led kept inclusiveness front and center in the new Bylaws adopted in 2020. Again with their help, the Board has revised many of its policies with 8th Principle values in mind. Recognizing the importance of widening opportunities for participation, we gave the Nominating Committee a new name and new mission: Leadership Development. We expanded the definition of membership and formally recognized "friends." We endorsed the resolution to adopt the 8th Principle. But of course, as a Board and a congregation, we still have a long way to go. We invite all of you to join us in the journey.

LEARN

Message From Laura Solomon, Director of Spiritual Growth



I frequently fall in love with poems.

One of my latest loves is the poem “Dead Stars” by poet Ada Limón. (You can read this poem here: [Dead Stars by Ada Limón - Poems | Academy of American Poets](#)).

February feels like this poem to me—“I am a hearth of spiders these days...,” the author writes, “...a nest of trying.”

If I am nothing else these days, I am a nest of trying. In a conversation with a friend the other day, she said, “aren’t we so human?” By this, of course, she meant, “aren’t we so complicated? Don’t we try and fail and try again so many times? Aren’t we so full of contradictions and beauty and love, and isn’t it both so hard and so lovely to be in relationship?”

“Aren’t we each just such a nest of trying?,” she was asking.

During this time, particularly, I think we are remembering and re-remembering how very human we are.

But Ada Limón’s poem continues with the line that most stays with me: “Look, we are not unspectacular things. We’ve come this far, survived this much. What would happen if we decided to survive more? To love harder?”

We are not unspectacular things. We—these nests of trying—we *are* spectacular in all the ways we are so very human. In all the ways we are fragile and frightened and unsure. By grace, and hope, and love, I believe we are *also* spectacular.

Thank goodness for the holy humanness of us—for the ways we mess up and try again and fail and try something new. *Thank goodness* we are these messy nests of trying. *Thank goodness* we get to be this messy nest of trying in community, together. It is all humans have always been: spectacular, as we stumble and fall, and create new ways forward together.

Keep being spectacular,

Laura

Thank you, Lindsay Cowett!

As many of you know, Lindsay Cowett, our amazing RE Coordinator, moved to Chicago last fall to start graduate school. As she settles into graduate school life in Chicago, Lindsay will be stepping away from her duties at UUCSS to focus on her studies. I am so grateful to Lindsay for her leadership and support to the RE program (and beyond!) at UUCSS, and I know you will all join me in wishing her the very best in the future! **Thank you, Lindsay!**

Children and Youth RE Schedule

All classes meet 10 - 10:30 at <http://uucss.org/zoom3>

February 6 Virtual Children's Chapel for PreK - 8th grade; Virtual YRUU for grades 9-12

February 13 Virtual Grade-Based Programming for Children; Virtual YRUU

February 20 Virtual Art Assembly for PreK - 8th grade; Virtual YRUU

February 27 Virtual Grade-Based Programming for Children; Virtual YRUU



CONNECT



Events

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

February 6: 7:00 pm. **Men's Book Group.** We are reading *As I Lay Dying* by William Faulkner. We will meet to discuss the book on Zoom. If you are interested in joining the discussion, let Richard Lorr know (rlorr4@gmail.com), get the book, and join us on Zoom with the link Richard will give you.

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

February 11: 8:00 pm. **Ladies Night Out.** Currently, a Zoom chat for UUCSS women interested in connecting with other UUCSS women. To join the group and receive announcements, subscribe to the the church's UUCSS | Ladies-Night-Out listserv, which is a subgroup of the main UUCSS groups.io listserv.

February 14: 7:30 - 10:00 pm. **Online Men's Group.**

February 21: 7:30 - 10:00 pm. **Online Men's Group.**

February 28: 7:30 - 9:00 pm. **Women's Book Group.** *The Overstory* by Richard Powers. For now, we are meeting on Zoom. Interested readers are encouraged to come without a long-term obligation. For further information, please contact Deborah Weiner, dweiner04@gmail.com.

February 28: 7:30 - 10:00 pm. **Online Men's Group.**

Committee Updates

An Update from the Afghan Resettlement Task Force

We are excited to report that on Tuesday, January 11, we submitted our Good Neighbor Partner Commitment Form to Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Region! After careful consideration of our financial resources, we agreed to a partnership that does not include rental assistance, but does include a full range of core support areas to the family for 6 months. These include our pre-arrival tasks, currently underway: identifying, collecting, and storing household goods in preparation for furnishing the family's apartment. We need to know what items you can purchase or donate. If you have not already done so, please complete the survey by [CLICKING HERE AND FILLING OUT THIS FORM](#).

Once we are matched with a family and know its size and ages, we will be reaching out again with updated information about our family's needs.

In addition to preparing their apartment, stocking it with groceries, preparing a warm meal for their arrival, and transportation from the airport, we have pledged some essential support during the first month in their new home—helping to enroll the children in public school, and giving the family an orientation to public transit and other transportation options.

Our ongoing support will mean opening our arms wide to hold this family in fellowship and friendship. There will be opportunities to: connect the family to resources in their neighborhood, including faith communities; spend time in informal English conversation; take field trips to places of interest; provide transportation for shopping and appointments; donate gift cards, and more.

Our resettlement outreach has raised \$ 6,162 as of January 16! This fund will enable us to purchase household items that must be new, such as mattresses, and to help fulfill needs for other items as they arise. You can donate using the UUCSS Vanco app, which allows you to make a single donation or set up a regularly occurring one to the Afghan Resettlement Fund. You can also send a check to the church with Afghan Resettlement in the memo line.

Thanks to all for your interest and support. We look forward to sharing more news about our family when we receive it!

Racial Justice Task Force Update

Before I provide a quick update on the work of the Racial Justice Task Force, I'd like to offer a quick meditation. Tragedies like the hostage-taking on Saturday, January 16 at Congregation Beth Israel (Colleyville, TX) give us opportunities to reflect on how to do antiracism work.

As I think about how to think about those events, I could say:

A gunman entered a house of worship and held people hostage.

A gunman entered a Synagogue and held four Jewish men hostage.

A British man entered a Synagogue and held four American men hostage.

A Muslim man entered a Synagogue and held four Jewish men hostage.

The gunman may have ties to an Afghan woman imprisoned nearby on charges of terrorism.

It's impossible to know at this point which details of this event--which identities of the gunman, which identities of the victims--are most relevant in understanding what happened.

What we can know is that this act takes place within a long history of terror directed at Jews, and that this act is part of a sharp rise in antisemitic hate crimes in the US within the past few years. What we can know is that the impact of the action is magnified because of the white supremacist culture that surrounds us all.

If we seek to create the Beloved Community, where we all all feel as equal, valued, full members, we must work to dismantle white supremacy culture at every step. We must do so without demonizing or making assumptions. We must do so with a clear-eyed attention to the broader history and culture in which we are immersed. We must do so accountably. We must do so with love.

This is the work we take up in the Racial Justice Task Force--a commitment to work for justice while remaining grounded in our spiritual practices of love and honest seeking of truths.

As we come together as a Congregation to live into our new, 8th Principle, the RJTF offers these guiding questions, which came out of a monthly gathering of 8th-Principle-adopting congregations facilitated by Paula Cole Jones. How would you answer them?

1. What will we change, and what will we hold on to for the next 15 years?
2. What do you hope will happen in your church regarding the 8th Principle
3. How do we design our church to bridge cultural gaps so people feel connected? (mainly youth)
4. How can we get more members involved?
5. How do we involve children and youth?
6. What are our next steps?
7. What do you wish for?
8. How do we live the 8th principle?

Within the Racial Justice Task Force, we've identified three main focus areas for our work:

- **Antiracism Resource Channeling:** We'll continue to learn more about antiracism within UUism and UU congregations through UU sponsored training, 8th Principle congregation discussions, and studying UUA's *Widening the Circle* report alongside the Board and Program Council. We'll share what we learn with UUCSS committees and communities who are starting to dive into this work.
- **Healing and Hope:** We struggle with two urgent yet conflicting responsibilities: to build our hope and resilience while we continue to name and resist the endless manifestations of white supremacy in the culture around us. We'll build time into our monthly meetings to process these events, and we will work with the UUCSS community to create spaces to hold that grief and healing .
- **Direct Action:** Rather than develop new partnerships beyond our Congregation, we will join broader church events, such as the Afghan Resettlement project and a proposed collaboration with Action in Montgomery (AIM) which is an Industrial Areas Foundation led grassroots organizing model. As participants in these UUCSS efforts, we can bring an antiracism approach.

Thanks for reading, and thanks to everyone engaging with these issues with us and alongside us. We can do so much more together than any of us can alone.

—Phyllis Ryder



Auction Committee



Drum Roll, Please...And the Grand Total is...

More than \$24,000! Many thanks to everyone who helped raise money for the church through our Out-of-This-World auction. We couldn't have done it without you.

Your faithful auction committee,

Linda B, Emily H, Emily T

UU101 Convenes Feb. 6 during Coffee Hour

The Membership Committee is offering a UU101 on Sunday, Feb. 6, during the Coffee Hour following the service. UU101s are informal gatherings where newcomers to our church or those who have been attending a while can ask questions and learn about Unitarian Universalism and about UUCSS in particular. When you log into the Coffee Hour, just ask to be put into the 101 Breakout room. No need to RSVP but if you have questions, please email: membership@uucss.org

Volunteer Spotlight

Fred Teal, Jr.



Fred Teal grew up attending a Southern Presbyterian church in Washington, DC. Beliefs were very rigid there as well as in his home. The church was not a source of comfort and acceptance. He graduated from the University of Maryland with a liberal arts degree and was drafted into the US Army in the fall of 1958. He served in Germany where he met his first wife Erika. After his tour of duty ended, they came back to the US and started a family. They both wanted some religious background for their kids but one with an open, accepting atmosphere. The UU church seemed right and they began attending Paint Branch UUC in 1965.

Fred was a stalwart at Paint Branch. His children with Erika and then with Teresa Meeks (his second wife) were all raised in the UU tradition.

Eventually, he and Teresa spent a few years not attending. After retiring in 2013, Teresa began looking for another congregation and liked UUCSS. Fred followed shortly thereafter. They both found UUCSS warm and welcoming, and soon Fred began serving both as chair of the Dream Builders and a member of the Board. Both roles were difficult since seismic shifts were occurring in both ministry and in defining realistic building plans for the church. Time and wise decision makers resolved the issues. He has since become one of the key people in advancing our building plans, doing detailed analysis of proposals, and negotiating with contractors. The process has required more time than expected but many useful changes have emerged, and Fred has continued to contribute.

When asked why UUCSS, he said, "I experienced growing up in a home and a religion based on rules and rigidity. I needed a home of compassion and kindness and a religion that sees the value in every human being. In addition, community is of great value to me. We all need community, and this church has true community. That's why I'm here. I want to be needed and accepted, and I know I have that at UUCSS."

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

Staff Hours and Contact Information

Administrator

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

Dr. Laura Solomon, Director of Spiritual Growth

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

Michael Holmes, Music Director

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

Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt, Minister

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

UUCSS is Hiring for Two Positions

We are looking for a part-time Office Administrator to keep the office organized, maintain good communication with the congregation using tools set-up over the past year, and coordinate management of our campus. More information may be found at <https://uucss.org/2021/12/03/job-opportunity-at-uucss-2/>.

We are also looking for a part-time Religious Education Coordinator to work closely with the Director of Spiritual Growth and with volunteers to coordinate virtual and in-person Religious Education classes for children and youth. More information may be found at <https://uucss.org/2021/12/15/job-opportunity-re-coordinator/>.

UUCSS policies do not allow us to hire members for staff positions, but if you know someone who would be a good fit for either of these positions, please encourage them to apply!

Unitarian Universalist Church of Silver Spring

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FIRST CLASS

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Board President**

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Michael Holmes

Music Director

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Dr. Laura Solomon

Director of Spiritual Growth

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Lindsay Cowett

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

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

Send information and visuals to uniter@uucss.org.

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

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

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

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