

November 2022

Uniter



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF SILVER SPRING
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WORSHIP SERVICES



All Sunday services are offered in-person in our Sanctuary and broadcast live on Zoom. Please see the all-church email for the Zoom link. Masks are still required inside all buildings at UUCSS.

November 6: Come What May, Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

Political engagement has been an important part of being a Unitarian Universalist for generations. As the country heads into a pivotal Election Day, today's service will focus on how things are with our spirits, and how we can sustain hope and commitment, come what may.

November 13: Love Calls Us On, Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

This week in worship we will consider how truth, love, and justice are calling us into the future as individuals and as a church.

November 20: Giving Our Thanks, Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

This Sunday, join us for a service of gratitude for life's abundance, and the many opportunities we have to give and receive. After the service, everyone is invited to bring their favorite pie (sweet or savory) to share during coffee hour. This is a great chance to practice your baking before Thanksgiving!

November 27: When the Holidays Hurt, Rev. Caitlin Cotter Coillberg

For many of us the holidays are a time of joy and togetherness. But for those coping with pain, loss, or emotional changes as winter brings more cold and dark, this time of year can feel anything but "merry and bright." This special service will offer space for the pain that can come with this season, and time to reflect, sing, and pray together.

INSPIRE

Minister's Column by Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt



November always brings back memories of Thanksgivings when I was a kid. Every year we'd go to my aunt's house in Virginia the day before and roast the chestnuts that would go in the stuffing. Dinner on the holiday itself was always served later than planned, and afterward we'd watch movies and play video games until it was time to go home.

A few years ago my aunt and uncle sold the house where I spent nearly every holiday for the first half of my life. It wasn't the house where I lived, but its loss made me feel like I could "never go home again" in a significant way. Sometimes I wish I could go back in time to enjoy the way things were in the old days. But memory is a funny thing, because while my brain stores my childhood holidays

in one big lump, the truth is, they changed from year to year, too. Family members moved away, died, or got divorced, new loved ones were born or adopted or married into the family. Not all at once, but over time, some of our traditions stayed the same while others evolved or were let go.

These days I carry on many of the traditions my family did when I was young, and I've even updated a few. I still make apple chestnut stuffing, though we no longer roast the chestnuts ourselves. We still eat half of the cookies my mom makes before dinner is even served, and we still enjoy movies together after dinner. And we've blended these with much-beloved traditions from my husband's family, and created new traditions with our kids.

UUCSS has experienced a lot of change these last several years, some of it sudden and unexpected, some of it a slower evolution. Our congregation is about to experience even more change as work begins in early 2023 to renovate our Community Building and improve accessibility on our campus. In keeping with the congregation's input during last month's focus groups, more change will come after renovations are complete and we pursue financial sustainability by increasing rentals of our campus.

"Change" is the worship theme of the month for November, and as such we have an opportunity to take a step back and reflect how far we've come and where we're headed. It's easy to think of change as something that happens overnight or all at once. Sometimes change comes that way, but more often it's something that unfolds bit by bit, until suddenly we realize things are different than they used to be. It's normal to feel nostalgic for the old days; loss always comes with change. It's also normal to feel proud of how far we've come and excited about what's next.

We at UUCSS have a lot to be thankful for this year, especially as we celebrate our 70th year. I'm grateful to everyone who participated in a focus group and provided feedback about UUCSS's path into the future. I'm proud to help UUCSS carry forward the best of who we've been as a community, and share some of our precious traditions with the next generation. And I'm excited to help build a vibrant and accessible future, welcoming new people, new ideas, and new traditions into who we will become and the good we will do, together.

Message From Doneby Smith, Board President



Let me start with a few of the many things I am thankful for—the work of the organizers of a great Catoctin retreat (and that it was NOT a super-spreader event!), moving services with powerful readings and inspiring music, deep conversations with other Board members about ways to make church processes smoother, the legacy given us by previous generations of UUCSS members, and the breadth of engagement in our church. On these last points, over 100 people attended one of 12 focus groups to share the vision for reclaiming our Community Building, as well as for addressing campus-wide accessibility issues, staff office needs, and a variety of property concerns. Participants provided insights and posed important questions. Many thanks to all who participated and to the focus group presenters: Tamara Bowman, Catherine Buckler, Katie Haag, Emily Harris, Maggie Hayes, Jamie Jorgensen, Robin Lasky, Stephanie

McConachie, Susannah Numa, Beverly Schnetzler.

As I write this in mid-October, the leaves are partway through changing color. Soon the trees will be ablaze in gold and orange and scarlet. When the change is complete, it will be beautiful. It struck me that our buildings are also in the middle of a change that will be beautiful when it is completed—beautiful not just to look at, but also beautiful to have welcoming, functional buildings again.

Almost everyone who attended a focus group expressed support for renovating our Community Building and making safety and accessibility improvements to our campus and showed an understanding that we will need to raise money to achieve these worthy and reasonable goals. Seeing this, the Board voted unanimously to go forward with a capital campaign beginning immediately. We have invited Marcia Meehan, a consultant from J. D. Klote and Associates, to help lead the campaign. Thanks to the hard work of the Capital Improvements Committee, especially the co-chairs, Erik Leaver and Fred Teal, we completed the Sanctuary renovations. We are partway to our goal! Together we can finish the job!

LEARN

Contemplations from Rev. Caitlin Cotter Coillberg, Assistant Minister of Spiritual Growth



This November our Theme is “Change.” And gosh, we have lived through so much change, haven’t we? As individuals, as a society, and as a church. Many of us have taken to referring to the way we lived before the pandemic as the “before times”—but for churches, and especially for Religious Education (RE) programs, things have been changing for a lot longer than we’ve been dealing with COVID. Some of these changes have been great—we keep including more liberatory language, more postcolonial anti-oppressive anti-racist anti-ableist and inclusive lenses in our thinking, better OWL (Our Whole Lives) curriculum, etc. But a lot of the changes have been hard—and nobody knows what the future of RE will be. This isn’t the 1950s or even the 1990’s anymore, and things that worked in the past aren’t a good fit for the present.

This is a hard thing—so many of us have beautiful memories of RE days of yore, warm fuzzy powerful memories of how we learned and grew in our understanding, of how we felt held in tradition and in Community. We want those feelings to carry forward, want to keep learning and growing in our understanding. We want others—especially those new to Unitarian Universalism and our children—to have similar experiences. We want to know that the things that have mattered to us are still happening.

This year we are experimenting with a new time slot for RE classes, new space limitations while we work on the much-needed renovations coming for our Community building, a new minister of spiritual growth (hey y’all!), a new stage in the pandemic—it’s a lot! We’re all figuring out how to be back in the Sanctuary building while keeping each other safe and creating a sense of welcome and belonging (What does accessibility mean, in this day and age? How do we create a sense of belonging for all when we have conflicting needs? How can we create loving space for each other while managing our own anxieties and griefs?).

While we wrestle with these important questions, while we co-create the moving pieces of UUCSS’s religious education ministry together, we draw from the strength of the past (this is not the first time we have weathered change, as a congregation or as a religious tradition!) and from the truths of our tradition that continue to guide us. As a new minister to UUCSS, I am learning about you as individuals, as an institution, as a culture and system of leaders and doers and listeners and teachers and storytellers. I am learning the truths, the stories, and the priorities of this community.

This November I’d like to hold a few listening circles—to hear from y’all and get to know more about what you are longing for and needing and excited about. The first will be in person, before the service, downstairs in the Sanctuary building, at 9:30 am on Sunday, November 6. The second will be at 8 pm on Thursday, November 10, virtually over Zoom. Check your weekly updates for more information!

UUCSS History: The Original Thirteen by Jo Paoletti



The religious education volunteers, February 1954. (l to r) Dottie McPherson, Lee Conant, Marian Golan, Gene Miller, Margaret Dewis.

In observance of the 70th anniversary of the founding of UUCSS, Jo Paoletti is updating the history series originally published in the Uniter in 2017 and 2018.

On October 12, 1952, our congregation's first worship service was held in a classroom at Rolling Terrace Elementary School, and at the end of the service everyone in attendance signed the membership book—all thirteen of them. The "founders" included Rev. Dave McPherson, his wife Dottie, and eleven others:



Adult RE class, February 1953 (l to r: Max Miller, Alice Louise Miller, Marian Golan, Al Dewis, Bill Perry, Margaret FitzPatrick, Joe FitzPatrick.)

Lee and Louise Conant
Maxwell and Alice Louise Miller
Joseph and Margaret FitzPatrick
Albert and Margaret Dewis
Gerald and Coral Pollock
Eugene Miller (son of Maxwell and Alice Louise)

The next time you are in the sanctuary, look at the quilts. You'll find the Conants, Millers, and Dewises there. In that first year, Lee and Louise Conant served in six volunteer positions: co-treasurer, adult representative to the Religious Education (RE) committee, and co-treasurer (Lee), chair of the church decorations committee (Louise), and both taught RE. Lee had run away from home and joined the Marines as a teenager in the 1930s and served in Central America during the "Banana Wars" that supported the interests of American fruit companies. Al Dewis was the property chair and also on the planning committee that eventually led to the building of the first sanctuary (now the Community Hall); his wife Peggy taught RE and was vice president of our chapter of Universalist Women.

The Miller Room in the main building was named in honor of Maxwell and Alice Louise. Some old-timers still refer to it as the "New Miller Room;" the "Old Miller Room," dedicated in 1980, is in the basement of the Community Hall. It's a testimony to their place in the congregation that they were both living when the rooms were named in their honor. Max Miller not only drove to Boston and back in a day to deliver the check that bought the property, but also chaired the steering committee, taught RE, and represented the RE teachers on the RE committee. Alice Louise was the ubiquitous volunteer—no committee meetings or leadership positions, but she shows up again and again in photos and volunteer lists.

Max and Alice Louise's son, Eugene, signed the book as the lone young adult and never left. Gene was a familiar presence in and around the church until he and his late wife, Mary, moved to their retirement home in Solomons, MD, around 2002. After Gene's death in 2019, his brother Bob described Gene as "... a proper, caring, religious, and intelligent man. He loved collecting stamps and coins, and attending the Universalist Church in Silver Spring." Gene is remembered fondly by many UUCSS members from good times at the bridge table and for his steady financial leadership.

Next time you are admiring the quilts look for their names: Dewis, Conant, Miller. Say hello, and thanks.



CONNECT



Events

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

Join us for Monthly Church Workdays

It's time to beautify our church building and grounds. We need your help with:

- clearing vines & weeds to create a pollinator garden
- kitchen cleaning

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

join us on Saturdays from 8-11 am

- November 19

An outside, socially-distanced lunch will be served. Please bring a side dish to share!

Hope to see you there!!!

Brian Beard and Linda Barrett (UUCSS Garden Group)

Questions? Please email brianbeard@hotmail.com and limabean290@gmail.com.

Book Club Events

Dec. 4, 7 pm. Men's Book Club. We are reading *Pachinko*, a novel concerning Japanese oppression of Koreans in the twentieth century, by Min Jin Lee. 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 or come to an in-person meeting at Richard Lorr's home, depending on your preference. There is no meeting in November.

Nov. 28, 7:30 pm. Women's Book Group. We are now meeting in the Sanctuary. We are reading *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress* by Dai Sijie. All interested readers are welcome; please see our description in the subgroups at [groups.io.uucss.org](https://groups.io/uucss.org). Contact is Deborah Weiner, (dweiner04@gmail.com).

Committee Updates

UUCSS to Receive 13 Trees from a Chesapeake Bay Trust Grant

The UUCSS Green Sanctuary, Garden Group, Capital Improvement, and Property committees continue to take steps to make our buildings more energy efficient and our grounds more "green." We are thrilled to partner with Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake and be chosen for "The Chesapeake Bay Trust-Sacred Trees Grant" to plant 13 new native trees on our church grounds.

Thanks to Brian Beard's exceptional grant-writing skills, Casey Trees will be planting 13 new native trees throughout the UUCSS grounds on December 20, 2022. Along the back of the parking lot we will be adding a River birch, White oak, and Sweet gum. In the parking lot median we will add a Thornless Honeylocust and a Sweetgum. Along the front of the parking lot we will add a Linden and Hackberry. By the Fellowship Hall will be an American Hornbeam. Along New Hampshire Avenue we will be adding 2 Linden, a Southern Magnolia, and a Hackberry. Finally, by the driveway, we will be adding a Black Tupelo.

These native trees will give us greater biodiversity to feed our hungry pollinators and retain more rainwater, as well as years of shade for us to enjoy.

Member Spotlight: Brian Hopkins



Brian Hopkins grew up in the Methodist church and has fond memories of the camaraderie and caring that the church community provided. His parents were deeply religious, and he saw in them a commitment to love and volunteering. Alas, the Methodist view of God did not square with his work, decades of recording mayhem for News Channel 8/ABC7 as a videographer. He saw no way a loving, all-powerful God would let that evil exist, and so he became unchurched for a long time. His sister, a UU minister, suggested that maybe Unitarian-Universalism would be a good place to be and so after a bit of searching, he found UUCSS.

He introduced himself and was met with an immediate and warm welcoming response.

If you know Brian, you know about his incandescent smile followed as often as not with a great hug for his friends which include most people. You might also know him from his work as a worship associate and the endearing way he doesn't take himself seriously. Dig a little deeper, and you find a man committed to his family who would dearly like to find time to do more. He met his wife volunteering and loves being part of a caring community. But the life of a TV cameraman is often unscheduled, and he gave up choir to have more time with his wife and kids.

There are some things that Brian can fit in. He likes taking pictures on vacation. He likes barbecue and singing karaoke "stone-cold sober." He attends marching band performances that his son Jake and daughter Kaylee play in when he's not on assignment. And he loves walking into the church on Sunday morning and thinking of a song by Billy Joel called "Home." Brian wants a license plate that says "EZ2BNice," but that's more letters than are allowed. But for him it's his own best way to live and love at UUCSS.

Staff Hours and Contact Information

Rev. Caitlin Cotter Coillberg, Assistant Minister of Spiritual Growth

Caitlin is most available on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays--Mondays and Fridays are her flex days (either used for writing and planning or as days off, according to the needs of the church and her family). You can email her at amsg@uucss.org, text her at her Google Voice number (301-679-5832), or schedule a meeting with her via calendly: www.calendly.com/revcaitlin.

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.

Jeannette Jackson, Administrator

administrator@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

Unitarian Universalist Church of Silver Spring

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FIRST CLASS

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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**.