

December 2022

# Uniter



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF SILVER SPRING  
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[www.uucss.org](http://www.uucss.org)

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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 except for specific events as determined by the event organizers.*

**December 4:** *Wonder in the Darkness*, Rev. Caitlin Cotter Coillberg and Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

The winter holidays focus on the wonder of light, but in this all-ages service we will contemplate the darkness and the gifts it can bring. Since this is the first Sunday of the month, people of all ages are invited to come to the Multigenerational Choir at 9:30 where we will learn simple songs to sing in the 10:30 service.

**December 11:** *Wonder in the Waiting*, Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

Join us for this service of Advent Lessons and Carols on this third Sunday of the season of waiting before Christmas. Through poetry, scripture, and song we will reflect on the themes of faith, hope, love, and peace. All are invited to stay after the service for an all-ages Crafting and Caroling Party! More details to come in an all-church email.

**December 18:** *Wonder in the Light*, Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

Our free faith draws from many sources, and this week we join our Jewish members, friends, and neighbors in seeking wisdom in the Hanukkah story.

**December 24:** *The Wonder of Christmas Eve*

**6:00 p.m. Family Service**

Rev. Caitlin Cotter Coillberg

This night may not be so silent, but it will certainly be holy when we gather together to recall the Christmas story. This earlier service is geared toward children, families, and all young at heart. *All are invited to bring goodies to share at the 7:00 p.m. Cookie Party!*

**8:00 p.m. Lessons and Carols Service**

Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

In this contemplative service of lessons and carols, our gifted choir and musicians will help us weave together sacred narration, modern poetry, prayer, carols, and candlelight for a refreshing take on what the Christmas story means for us today. This later service is geared toward teenagers, adults, and all seeking a more contemplative Christmas Eve worship experience. *All are invited to come an hour early and bring goodies to share at the 7:00 p.m. Cookie Party!*

**December 25 (*Virtual Service on YouTube*): *The Wonder of Christmas Morning***

The UUCSS building will be closed and all staff off from Christmas morning through New Year's Eve. All who wish are invited to enjoy a virtual service offered by the ministers and musicians of several UU congregations around the country. See the church calendar or all-church email for the link to the 10:30 a.m. premiere on YouTube.

**January 1: *New Year's Day Jazz Service***

Start the New Year off right with our annual jazz service!

# INSPIRE

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



Perhaps the most wonder-full moments of my life have been the births of my children. There really is nothing else like holding a flesh-and-blood miracle for the first time, breathing in their intoxicating baby smell. The day before they had each been part of me, but the day they were born they were their own people. It made me feel connected to the generations that produced me, and to the generations that would come after me, through my children.

Several years later while on vacation I had another wonder-filled experience. We were at U Bar U, a UU family camp in the Texas Hill Country. Far away from most light pollution, more stars were visible than I'd ever seen with the naked eye before. It made me feel connected somehow to those far-away solar systems--and the

possible life forms on their planets, who might just then have been looking up into their skies wondering about me.

More recently, I've enjoyed the wonder of watching our kids grow and learn new things. The older two have built up some cooking skills, and it's amazing to eat food made by these children for whom I used to have to do nearly everything they needed to stay alive! Now the tea and soup they make me when I'm not feeling well makes me feel connected to my own parents in a new way, and I am in wonder of having this new shared experience with them.

Here at church, I've been filled with wonder and gratitude by this congregation's generosity and commitment. It's wonderful to see you get as excited as I am about completing our Community Building renovations, improving accessibility on our campus, and paying off the new mortgage early to free up more money in our yearly budgets moving forward.

Each of the experiences I just shared has filled me with a different kind of wonder. Each kind is meaningful, but they aren't the same. They are unique, special in their own way. Likewise, the different winter holidays each offer their own gateways into wonder. While a lot of the imagery in the stories at the heart of each tradition's celebrations is similar, each holiday is different, unique, and special because of that. And in our free faith, this diversity of meaning and wonder is a good thing!

Whatever holidays your family celebrates this time of year, I hope you are able, at least for a while, to tune out of the hustle and bustle and tune into the wonder of the season. I also hope you and yours will join us for the many services and activities we have planned this month. There are several opportunities to connect in worship, Religious Education, in fellowship, and across generations with people of all ages.

Happy Holidays!

## Message From Doneby Smith, Board President



Woohoo! What a great kick-off we had to our capital campaign. Many thanks to all who made it possible: Emily Tien, Katie Haag, Linda Barrett, Paul Iobst, Anna Molpus, Ron Turner, Susannah Numa, Michael Holmes, and the choir. And a special thanks to the folks whose donations have gotten us off to such a good start. With pledges for \$546,320 already made, we have a good shot at reaching our \$1.2 million goal. We will need each person or household to contribute as generously as your situation and budget allow. Whatever amount you can contribute, be it large or small, the important thing is to be part of helping our church move forward. With renovated physical facilities as an anchor and resource for our work, we can continue helping each other and open our doors along with our hearts to help and heal our larger community. Please respond when your steward/visitor contacts you to set up a time to get together so you can hear details about how your pledge will be used and have a chance to ask questions. As we enter the holiday season of gratitude and hope, I am thankful for all the work of the Capital Improvement Committee and the Capital Campaign Steering Committee and so many others, and I hold high hopes that we will reach our campaign goals. May you be blessed and may you be a blessing!

## LEARN

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



December is our fourth month of the new model of Religious Education, a great time to reflect on how things are going. Last month I did a series of listening circles, and I am of course also just excited to hear from folks via email or in passing about what is working and what they are longing to create.

We're deeply aware of the challenges we're facing with Religious Education right now--for our congregation and far beyond it. Limited volunteer capacity and low numbers are being experienced everywhere--we're all so tired at this stage of the pandemic, and it's hard to get volunteers and to show up for things. We've got the extra challenges here of limited space, limited administrative support and staff (we're still looking for nursery staff and an RE coordinator, if you know anyone who might be interested!), and of course figuring out a new

model to manage transitions and snacks and such.

Folks in our RE listening circles also named many joys: excitement with the new model and how everyone in the family gets something from it, the chance to connect with friends and then be together in the service (the profound joy of sharing space with babies and children in the service and hearing their noises was particularly mentioned). Folks are loving the reframe in the model toward intergenerational ministry. And they named that they like how this experiment in doing RE differently gives all of us the opportunity for grace--to forgive ourselves and each other as we fail forward into figuring out what works for us just now.

What do we need from Religious Education right now? What do we have the energy to do? Each of us as individuals, as families, a congregation? These are questions many Unitarian Universalists are wrestling with right now (I particularly appreciated this recent article from my colleague Evin: <https://www.uua.org/central-east/blog/better-together/where-are-children>), and we'll continue to find courageous, collaborative, creative answers to them. In the meantime, I am looking for thought partners, teachers, nursery volunteers, and more!

Do you love superheroes? Have excitement around anti-racism work? Want to help me think through how best to create space for kids of all ages in the sanctuary? Want to be part of making potlucks happen? I look forward to being in conversation with you! Shoot me a message at [amsg@uucss.org](mailto:amsg@uucss.org), text me: 301-679-5832, or schedule a Zoom meeting via this link: [www.calendly.com/revcaitlin](http://www.calendly.com/revcaitlin).

With many blessings,  
Rev. Caitlin

## UUCSS History: From Stable to Sanctuary by Jo Paoletti

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.

It seems appropriate, as we are about to embark on a long-expected upgrade of our Community Hall, to share a bit of its history. For our first ten years, our congregation had land but no worship space of our own. The newly acquired property featured a small stable that was soon remodeled to serve as a meeting space and a spartan office for the minister. The work was entirely done by volunteers, including Rev. Dave McPherson, who recalled that a couple of old refrigerators are buried in a corner of the foundation.



Fellowship House work crew



The minister's office under construction in the hayloft



My husband Jim and I visited the Rev. McPherson at his home in Ashland, Virginia, in the fall 2017. I wanted to know more about the first decade of our church, and Jim was curious about planning, funding, and construction of our first building, the present Community Hall. We had recently found a set of slides depicting a meeting, with the individuals posed in exaggerated attitudes of frustration and despair (See Left).

In one photo, Max Miller was sitting beside a building model that bore little resemblance to the Community Hall. Rev. McPherson had not been at that meeting, but he guessed it was around the time they had to abandon the original build plans due to lack of funds. It turns out that between 1955 (when they first started planning for a building) and 1964 (when the building was completed), they went through two architects (both church members, working pro bono), two sets of plans, and at least one detour into consideration of buying a different property entirely, where construction might be less costly. It was heartening, in a way, to learn that our history of building efforts has always been characterized by fits and starts.

Rev. McPherson wrote a history of the church in 1959 which has much more detail about these early years. Jo will post it to the Facebook group and to our Groups.io list so it can be enjoyed by all.



# CONNECT



## Book Club Events

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

**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](mailto: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.

## Committee Updates

### A Musical Quilt: The New UUCSS Music Program CD

Great Holiday Gift or Stocking Stuffer Idea!

The new UUCSS Music Program CD (seven years in the making!!), featuring 13 of our UUCSS composers, is still available. It could make a perfect holiday gift or stocking stuffer. You can obtain your copy by contacting Michael Holmes at [musicdirector@uucss.org](mailto:musicdirector@uucss.org) or finding him after any of the Sunday services in December. Payment can be made by check (to UUCSS; memo: "Music Program CD), cash, or NOW via the church Vanco account on the Vanco phone app. There is an option to click to direct the money toward the CD project. Also, digital downloads will be available soon through CD Baby. Please stay tuned for details on the download option.

### A message from the Capital Campaign Steering Committee

Our November 20th Capital Campaign launch event was a fun time for all! We made pie, we ate pie, we celebrated our progress in raising funds for Opening our Doors (46% of our \$1.2 million goal) and we gathered in fellowship! It felt like old times and a glimpse of our bright future together all at once. It was also proof of what is possible here at UUCSS when we put our hearts, minds, and energy toward a common purpose. Here we share a few photos capturing the fun and energy of that memorable day. Over the coming weeks, we will all be called upon to contribute to the Capital Campaign. Every gift will be welcome and cherished. We look forward to spending the holidays with you, as well as the renovations to be completed in 2023 with your generous support! We can't wait to see what's next here at UUCSS!

Please browse some fellowship photos provided by Pat Scheid if you need inspiration:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1KxKCge5X4K2YclIdVHWq9F1rMleBTzvl?usp=sharing>

In fellowship and love,  
Your Capital Campaign Steering Committee



## Member Spotlight

Oops! The program council got a little off track with the monthly Member Spotlight feature. We spotlighted some members in July and August, but since the Uniter isn't published then, we just realized that the spotlights weren't either. So this month we're linking you to the spotlights for Zoë Randol and the Scurry Family, which you'll find at the links below. We'll bring you a new spotlight in January.

**Zoë Randol:** <https://uucss.org/2022/11/10/july-2022-member-spotlight-zoe-randol/>

**The Scurry family:** <https://uucss.org/2022/11/10/august-2022-member-spotlight-the-scurry-family/>

## 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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto:musicdirector@uucss.org).

### **Jeannette Jackson, Administrator**

[administrator@uucss.org](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://www.calendly.com/rev-kristin-schmidt)

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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](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**.