

May 2023

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

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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.

May 7: A Special Star Wars Sunday, Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

In this service for all ages we will reflect on the wisdom of Star Wars which offers a vision of what's possible when a community believes in itself, trusts it's part of something greater, and dedicates itself to a more free future for all.

May 14: Creating Solidarity: Celebrating Mother's Peace Day, Rev. Caitlin Cotter Coillberg

Arise, all people who have hearts, and join us for a Sunday Service celebrating the radical history of Mother's Peace Day. How we will live into the anti-war, pro peace legacy of this holiday, and what does Peace mean for us in this time of rising division and hate?

May 21: Our Vision of Ministry Clear, Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

Over the last several weeks we've explored what makes this congregation who we are, the gifts we are equipped with today, and the needs and opportunities in our wider communities. This Sunday, we will put those two things together and explore how truth, love, and justice are calling UUCSS to use our gifts to serve the world. Everyone is invited to stay after this service for a light lunch and the chance to share your input in the final Mission & Vision workshop!

May 28: Living with Pride, Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

Join us this Sunday as we celebrate LGBTQ+ pride in music, story, prayer, and song!

INSPIRE

Minister's Column by Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt



I can still remember the smell of the tempera paints, the heaviness of the smock I wore over my clothes, and the sensation of smearing colors on the large easel lined with paper in front of me. Even when I began with an idea of what to finger paint, the art always seemed to take on a life of its own, images flowing onto the page through my fingers.

Everyone experiences creativity in their own way. For some the creativity is sparked in solitude, for others it comes out of collaboration. Many find creativity in methodical work, others by sitting in the midst of chaos. But no matter how it happens or what the medium, creativity is the process by which we imagine the formerly unimagined and then make it real.

Creativity can inspire us to learn and grow, live courageously, and even change the course of our lives. But perhaps the most powerful thing creativity can do is help us heal and transform. As Fr. Richard Rohr has said, “if we don't find a way to transform our pain, we will always transmit it to those around us or turn it against ourselves... If your religion is not teaching you how to recognize, hold, and transform suffering, it is junk religion.”

In this spirit, creativity is our worship theme for the month of May. We have four services planned to explore some of its aspects. From Star Wars to Mother's Day, Visioning to Pride, we will consider what all have to teach us about creativity. Please make sure to mark your calendar for the final Visioning workshop after the service on Sunday, May 21. Childcare and lunch will be provided, and it's at this workshop that the real magic will happen and participants will begin to imagine just what future vision UUCSS is called to create together. It will be fun, and we can't do it without you!

Message From Doneby Smith, Board President



What are We Planting This Spring?

We are called to deep discernment both within our church and within our denomination to plant the seeds for what we want to see grow. At UUCSS, as we revisit our mission and vision together, we have decisions to make. With the easing of the pandemic, we can now widen the circle of concern beyond the needs of our members. However, as we saw in the April discussion, our local community has many needs: poverty, housing, and healthcare to name just a few. If we wish to have a meaningful impact, we will have to decide where to concentrate our efforts. Making a commitment to partner with one or two local organizations will also mean looking at the flip side: what will we let go as we redirect our energies? Piling on more tasks is a recipe for burnout and discouragement. Can we invent simpler ways of working? What is nice but not necessary? What could be accomplished through email rather than meetings? Could we restructure our committees and councils? Could we have just one social justice group instead of four? We need not be tied to old ways if new approaches can free up our time and energy. Along with planting, weeding and clearing away the deadwood are parts of gardening too.

On the denominational level, the major issue before us is the proposed re-working of the Principles. At General Assembly (GA) in June, there will be a vote on whether to move forward in the current direction, with the expectation of a vote on adoption in 2024. What is our position? Our delegates need to know since they are our voice at GA.

Discernment requires deep thinking, but it is not solely a mental exercise. We need to bring our hearts and spirits into the process. The commitments we make will only endure and bear fruit if all our parts are in concordance and pulling together. Where is our joy? How will we flower?

LEARN

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



This Month in Religious Education at UUCSS

Sunday May 7th is Star Wars Sunday! We'll have a short All Ages Jedi Academy before the service at 9:30 to work on some Jedi mindfulness. Feel free to come in costume (but please leave all weapons at home). Archive Explorers will be set up in the sanctuary before the service.

Sunday May 14th will be the Superhero Academy (Elementary School), Building Bridges (Middle School), and Connecting Through Games (High School), as well as UU

History (with Rev. Caitlin). Looking for nonparent/guardian volunteers to help with Children's Community Time during the service and give our caregiving adults a rest.

Sunday May 21st at 9:30 will be the Superhero Academy, Building Bridges, and Connecting Through Games for children and Youth, with Lectio Divina and The Gifts and Challenges of Aging for adults, instead of our usual third Sunday programming! Note that this is a scheduling change to avoid a conflict with the holiday next week.

Sunday May 28th is Memorial Day Weekend! Note that we are switching the usual fourth Sunday classes to be the week before. We'll be doing art in the back of the sanctuary this Sunday.



Coming Up in Religious Education

Calling All Nature Lovers! This Summer, instead of RE before the service and Children's Community Time during the Service, kids of all ages will be invited to head outside partway through the service to take part in our special Pollinator Program! This will feature fun snack activities, observation, games, and crafts and center our UU values.

Want to be a part? We are recruiting now for Activity Leaders and Summer Teachers for this 10 session curriculum. Only available to teach a few times, or to lead a few of the activities? That's totally fine! We're excited to have you on board.



We're also actively recruiting for Our Whole Lives, which we hope to offer for multiple age groups next year, and will be reaching out soon to families and folks of all ages to figure out what our biggest needs are for OWL.

We have another couple months of Children's Community time, our Parent/Guardian/Caregiver Co-op of kids-during-worship time. Sign Up is here:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0E4AACA72DABF5C07-supervision>

And here's our RE Wish List, if you would like to contribute to the RE program by contributing materials:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YhImlv8IyrP5WYIR1reFSJp_SjQWNldhnLL4lCh9LIU/edit

Questions, comments, want to get involved? Email Rev. Caitlin at ams@uucss.org or our RE Coordinator Sara at recoordinator@uucss.org. You can also text Rev. Caitlin at 301-679-5832, or schedule zoom meetings with her at www.calendly.com/revcaitlin (or meet her for coffee or whatever!).

Remember that Rev. Caitlin is typically most available Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, and usually takes Friday and Saturday as her days off.

UUCSS History: News from the “Archives”

Instead of my usual historical sketch, I thought I would provide an update on the status of the UUCSS “archives.” I use quotation marks because what we have falls short of what most people would expect to find under that title: an organized collection of historical records or materials. We have 70 years of material—reports, orders of service, Uniters, photos—very roughly organized by type and date. There is no catalog. There is an inventory, but it is out of date, because things get moved around to make room for new stuff. If you want to find something, you ask me to retrieve it. There is no other finding aid; just my memory.



I became the unofficial UUCSS historian a few years back, when Mark Morrison-Reed spent a weekend here helping us explore and discuss our history in relation to social justice efforts. I wrote a series of articles for the Uniter for our 65th anniversary, as background for our recent ministerial search, and again for our 70th anniversary. My husband Jim and I created the “history spiral” that hangs in the foyer (and needs to be updated!). I am not an archivist; according to people with degrees in history, I am a lesser sort of historian, since my speciality is the history of dress. But I know how to use archives and what a useful archive looks like.

In March, I traveled to Chicago for a conference with the UU Studies Network, which connects academic and nonacademic researchers who explore Unitarian, Universalist, and UU history and culture. There is a growing interest in congregational histories, and a newly-established circle of “local” historians and archivists sharing methods and sources. It’s a great start, and long overdue. We meet once a month by Zoom.

We have a lot of useful materials in our “archive;” I have shared a few via Facebook and before services on the first Sunday of the month. As we look forward to the renovation of the Community Hall, we need to get serious about how to store these materials and how to make them more accessible. To do this, I need help. If you have an interest, contact me: jo.paoletti@gmail.com.

Jo Paoletti



CONNECT



Events

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

Food Bank Donations: Sunday, May 7

UUCSS will collect food donations on the first Sunday of every month for the food bank at Silver Spring Christian Reformed Church (1501 Arcola Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20902). Please bring canned fruit in its own juice or water, canned vegetables with no added sodium, canned meats (chicken, salmon, tuna), low-sodium soups, meals in a can (such as chili, beef stew, spaghetti), whole wheat pasta and pasta sauce, low-sugar cereal and oatmeal, dried beans or rice, nuts, oils and vinegars to church on the first Sunday of the month. If you will not be at church on the first Sunday of the month, you can leave your donation in the kitchen, labeled “food bank donation.”

Sunday Book Group: Sunday, May 21 at 7pm

Formerly known as the Men’s Book Group, the Sunday Book Group is now open to all members and friends of the Church. Its new name derives from its intention to be open to all and to meet on a Sunday, more or less about once a month (but perhaps not at all during the summer months). In May, we will meet at the home of **Bill Wolf** to discuss ***Afterlives***, a 2020 historical fiction novel by the Nobel Prize-winning Zanzibar-born British author, **Abdulrazak Gurnah**. If you are interested in joining the discussion, get the book, let **Richard Lorr** know (rlorr4@gmail.com) and join us at the meeting.

Women's Book Group: Monday, May 22 at 7:30

We meet on the fourth Monday of each month in the UUCSS sanctuary foyer. 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm. All interested readers are welcome without a long-term obligation. A title for May has not yet been selected. It will be announced in the all-church email when decided. Questions and suggestions are welcomed at dweiner04@gmail.com.

Join Us for Monthly Church Workdays

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

- Clearing vines & weeds
- Pruning bushes
- Digging out plants
- Dusting & tidying
- Boxing stuff in Community Bldg

Mark Your Calendar and Join Us on Saturdays...

- May 27 10 am – 12 pm
- June 24 9 – 11 am
- July 22 9 – 11 am
- August 26 9 – 11 am
- September 23 9 – 11 am
- October 28 10 am – 12 pm
- November 18 10 am – 12 pm

An outside lunch will be served after. 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.

Committee Updates

Update from the Finance Chair

By Tamara Bowman

Here's the updated information on UUCSS finances. The amounts for ABD Pledges and Capital Campaign are the monies received this fiscal year, not the amounts pledged.

Budget period from July 1, 2022, through April 15, 2023

Capital Campaign		\$241,574.42
Income		
	ABD Pledges	\$320,022.69
	Rental Income	\$31,105.00
Expenses		\$523,274.81
Endowment		\$84,462.93

If you have other finance related questions please direct them to finance@uucss.org.

Green Sanctuary News

Maryland Climate Bills 2023

A big THANK YOU to all who helped!

There were 13 successes, including these passed bills:

- 1) The Community Solar Bill (HB908/SB613) makes the “solar farm” pilot into a permanent program
- 2) The Offshore Wind Act (HB793/SB781)

This bill will increase the construction of wind generators off the coast of Maryland. By adding 1 GW capacity, it moves us towards our goal of 8 GW

- 3) The Clean Trucks Act (HB230/SB224)

The bill would require Maryland to adopt California’s 2020 Advanced Clean Truck Rule, which mandates that vehicle manufacturers sell a gradually increasing percentage of zero-emission trucks, vans, and buses in the state beginning in 2027



Twenty bills did NOT pass, including:

- 4) The Beverage Container Refund Bill (HB 1089) would motivate the return of glass, aluminum, and plastic containers to recycling centers by paying a per-item fee to individuals, businesses, and local governments
- 5) The Energy Savings Act aka EmPower Reform Act (HB 904/SB 689)

This bill reforms the EmPower program by focusing incentives on switching from fossil-fuel -burning furnaces and appliances to electric units rather than on “energy-efficiency” alone

- 6) The Climate, Labor, and Environmental Equity Act (HB840/SB743)

This bill will require state agencies to fully assess the health and environmental impacts on marginalized communities before issuing work permits and prioritize those communities for public protection

For details on 33 climate/environment bills, check this link:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/14KLzz07hikLBAuPphmalrgeStAIGqL_E/edit?usp=share_link&ouid=118212821183217569236&rtpof=true&sd=true

What’s Going on with the UUCSS Grounds?

The UUCSS garden group and Green Sanctuary committee have been awarded 2 grants from the Chesapeake Bay Trust to:

- Install 13 new trees
- Remove invasive plants
- Create a pollinator conservation garden
- Educate about the importance of creating pollinator habitats

You may have seen some plants being removed around church lately as we get garden beds ready for planting in 2023 and 2024. As the pollinator gardens take shape—you will notice bees, butterflies, wasps, flies, beetles, and birds showing up.

Garden Guide for May

- For spring flowers, shrubs, and vines—prune them directly after blooming
- After Mother’s Day—plant warm season annuals and tender bulbs in ground and in containers (marigolds, dahlias, gladiolus, calla lilies)
- After Mother’s Day—plant warm season vegetables (squash, peppers, tomatoes, corn, beans)
- Keep new fruit plants watered for 1 year
- Mow lawns at 3-4 inches and leave the clippings on the lawn
- Sparingly tidy the garden of leaves and twigs

FREE Compost Bins—May 6 at Blair High School

Montgomery County is providing free compost bins for people receiving county-provided recycling collection. To order bins:

<https://pages.services/info.montagemarketinggroup.com/dep-to28-eorder-form-landing-page>

Bin pick-up is Saturday, May 6, at Blair High School.

There are two options available for the bins: the HotFrog Dual Body Tumbling Composter and the Earth Machine. Here are links that show the models:

HotFrog

https://www.amazon.com/Dual-Body-Tumbling-Composter-HOTFROG/dp/B011FN972U?ref_=ast_sto_dp

Earth Machine

<https://www.orbiscorporation.com/en-us/products/environmental-recycling-and-waste/compost-bins/npl-300-earth-machine/>

June 11—Pollinator Festival

Our Pollinator Festival will follow the Flower Communion Service. We have planned many fun and educational activities to celebrate our new Pollinator Garden.

Learn how small changes to your yard can support wildlife and help combat climate change.

- Native plant give-away
- Recognizing and removing invasive plants
- Pollinator art projects
- The wonders of bees, butterflies, and bugs
- Pollinator photo booth
- Food and music



Member Spotlight: Sydney Alexander

Sydney Alexander grew up in UUCSS. Or at least from age five on. Her family started out in the Lutheran Church but her parents were seeking a more humanistic spiritual philosophy. Sydney noticed that at UUCSS children were welcome in the sanctuary and the overall tone was more open and welcoming. During middle school, she went through Lutheran confirmation. This was something her parents encouraged. They knew that she still had something to learn from her childhood church, with the tools that she had learned from the UU tradition. Here, she felt the power of faith in a way she hadn't before. In fact, studying the Bible and examining her own beliefs led her to study theological anthropology.

Learning about religion and religious beliefs is a major driver in Sydney's life. She left us for a while in 2016 during the beginning of the Trump years and our continued denominational struggle at grappling with understanding the 8th Principle. Through a great deal of exploration, she came to the belief that most religions have compassion in their DNA but can be powerful tools of control and oppression. Her own spiritual practice is largely solitary, centered around creative forms of meditation, such as song, dance, poetry. These practices have been key in managing her mental and physical ailments, things that have plagued her for as long as she can remember. Coupled with the seemingly endless losses of loved ones throughout her childhood, Sydney found herself without faith; not in a God, not in a Spirit, not in people. High school was the first time that she wasn't a part of a spiritual community. She had to find her way back. Social action work was that spark of divinity that led her to join UUCSS again.

Sydney primarily works with two radical organizations: Harriet's Wildest Dreams and the Black Workers Center Chorus. Harriet's Wildest Dreams is a Black Defense Hub dedicated to abolishing police and prisons for Black liberation with no conditions. There is an emergency in the treatment of Black Americans by law enforcement and the prison system. She firmly believes it must be dismantled, not reformed. The organization provides legal defense, direct action, education and community organizing. She also participates in Safety Squad. The second source of her "heart work" is the Black Workers Center Chorus. As a sister group to the Black Workers Wellness Center, the chorus is for Black and Indigenous people who sing for justice and against the continued genocidal colonialism that occupied countries suffer. The group is proud that there is no audition. Access to classical music training is not evenly distributed. If you want to sing, come in and join. Currently, Sydney has just finished up an Associate of Arts degree and is looking for a college to finish a Bachelor's degree. Her educational goals are to attend seminary school and join the ministry. This vocation holds that difficult but beautiful intermingling of compassion, spirituality, and social action and seems to be a perfect fit.

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

10309 New Hampshire Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20903

FIRST CLASS

Staff and Board President

Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

Minister

minister@uucss.org

Rev. Caitlin Cotter Coillberg

Assistant Minister
of Spiritual Growth

AMSG@uucss.org

Michael Holmes

Music Director

musicdirector@uucss.org

Jeannette Jackson

Church Administrator

administrator@uucss.org

Sara Scott

Religious Education Coordinator

recoordinator@uucss.org

Doneby Smith

Board President

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.

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**.