

September 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 recommended but not required for worship services and other church functions. A section of seats in the Sanctuary will be reserved for people who wish to remain masked and prefer to sit among other people who are also wearing masks.

September 3: *Labor Day*, Rev. Kristin G. Schmidt

Labor Day evokes memories of black and white pictures from over a century ago, but the Labor Movement is as relevant today as it was then. This week we consider what our faith has to say about economics, religion's role in our society, and we welcome two Board members of the Montgomery County Educators Association to join Rev. Kristin in conversation about how we can live out our faith by supporting today's labor movement.

September 10: *We Flow As One: Annual Water Ceremony*, Rev. Kristin G. Schmidt

Whether from your favorite beach, the stream along your favorite hiking path, or just the hose you use to water your garden, everyone is invited to bring some water to mingle in our annual Water Ceremony! Kids are encouraged to wear their swimsuits underneath their clothes so they can enjoy Splash Day after the service, and adults are invited to stay for Volunteer Training. A light lunch will be served for the congregation.

September 17: *The Many Hats We Wear*, Rev. Kristin G. Schmidt

Education conjures images of classrooms with designated teachers and students. But even though they might be wearing the teacher "hat," the best educators will tell you that they learn just as much as their students do. As we begin Religious Education for children and youth this week, we will reflect on the many different "hats" we each wear as co-creators of this faith community. After the service everyone who wishes is invited to stay after for a light lunch and Leadership Retreat.

September 24: Special guest, Rev. Morgan MacLean preaching

This will be the first of three services Rev. Morgan will lead while Rev. Kristin is on a mini month-long sabbatical. Join us in giving Rev. Morgan a warm, hearty UUCSS welcome!

INSPIRE

Minister's Column by Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt



Last month marked the start of my fourth year serving as your settled minister, my fourteenth year as an ordained minister, and my eighteenth year of service as a religious professional. Even so many years into this vocation, I still get excited as summer draws to a close and we gear up for a new program year to begin. I'm looking forward to the many special worship services that lie ahead, including our Water Ceremony on September 10 and the first day of religious education on September 17.

But this year I'm mostly excited for what seems like the most "normal" beginning of any year since I was called to be your minister! During prior years, the pandemic sometimes made it feel like we were trying to build momentum on shifting sands. So, while we can never know what any year will bring, and while the much-anticipated renovations to the Community Building will undoubtedly bring some challenges, I'm glad to begin this year with all of you and our fabulous staff and lay leaders on more solid ground.

I'm also excited because last spring the Board approved my request for one month of sabbatical leave from late September through late October. This short sabbatical will allow my family to take a long-promised, pandemic-delayed trip to Disney World (my kids have been saving their money for five years), and for me to spend the rest of the time immersing myself in a few theologians whose writings concern the life of faith amid rising nationalism. The amazing Rev. Morgan MacLean, a longtime friend and colleague, will preach for three of the four Sundays I'm away, and she will be on call to support the Board and Lay Ministers. Along with providing occasional sabbatical coverage around the DC area, Rev. Morgan also serves in the Unitarian Universalist Association International Office as International Engagement Program Manager.

I am incredibly grateful to serve in a tradition that has made provisions for its leaders to take time for rest, play, renewal, and deep reflection. Ministry is as demanding as it is rewarding, and sabbatical—however long or short—helps both ministers and congregations build stamina and gain important perspective for the years ahead. And I look forward to many years ahead with all of you!

Message From Catherine Buckler, Board President



Welcome to a new church year! I'm excited to serve as your board president this year. The last one seems like a tough act to follow—leaning into a new “post”-pandemic normal, a successful capital campaign and a mission and visioning process, reinvigoration of our grounds with new trees and pollinator gardens! All this on top of the usual blessings of inspiring worship, fulfilling faith development, connecting fellowship activities and, of course, the usual meetings, and other church business!

This year, we will continue work on the big things from last year. In September we'll gather to talk about how to make our new mission statement real. What do we mean when we say, “UUCSS creates joyful spiritual community where we connect deeply, grow, serve, and mobilize for collective liberation.” There are so many ways to live into this beautiful mission. How do you imagine us doing that?

The community hall renovations will finally start! We owe a major debt of gratitude to the fearless leaders of the capital improvements team (Erik Leaver, Fred Teal, Brian Beard, Doneby Smith, Linda Barrett, and Robin Moore Lasky) as they continue to steward this huge project. Anyone who has done a home renovation project knows how many unexpected headaches can come up. I'm sure they appreciate our support and encouragement, and if they call for helpers, I know we'll all respond! We'll need to lean into grace and acceptance as we encounter the disruptive aspects of renovations. But when it's done, we'll have a big party to welcome new life into the space that already holds the memories of so much previous life. What lively things do you imagine in our renovated Community Hall?

Even amidst all these new things, we can still rely on the comfort of the familiar this fall. The water ceremony, our Catoctin retreat, the auction and the fellowship events that result from it, Halloween haunted house, Christmas Eve services, to name just a few! We are truly a congregation with an embarrassment of riches! And, in my humble opinion, our greatest treasure is the people who make up this loving community.

If you'd like to answer my questions, please feel free to respond to president@uucss.org.

LEARN

Message from Rev. Caitlin Coillberg, Assistant Minister of Spiritual Growth



This year we have a new team* working on the question of how we do Religious Education (RE) and Spiritual Growth for all Ages at UUCSS. The team is considering how we can do learning for all ages in ways that encourage spiritual growth, playfulness and connection. This team started meeting in August and is very excited to think about our goals and programs in new ways!

Our new team says:

The school year may be back in full swing but autumn does not always mean it's harvest time. If we think about RE as a [garden](#) our congregation tends, the pandemic effectively flooded this particular space of spiritual growth. Before we jump back into planting the same seeds in the same waterlogged ground, the UUCSS RE task force recognizes the need to grieve the loss of our figurative garden, survey the land, and prepare ourselves for the work of replanting. This year, we intend to build a temporary garden path for our congregation to travel. It will offer important staples, while also letting the larger land rest until it's ready to reseed. Our future garden won't replicate what we once had because we are changed and our land is changed. And yet we know, we can grow everything we need to thrive.

What does that overworked metaphor mean for the youth of our congregation this year?

We are excited to bring back essentials, like Our Whole Lives (OWL) for 7th-9th graders, starting Sunday, September 17. Adult OWL and 4th-6th grade OWL are planned for January. Register here for OWL: <https://forms.gle/jjZxQgivZQwnFW2u5>

We will continue to have children and youth stay for the first half of the service, and then leave for children and youth worship breakout groups! We are repurposing the Fellowship House to hold those breakout groups. For the fall this will provide space for 1) the Superhero Academy--a play and learning space for elementary school kids and 2) a connection-building lounge for older youth to spend time with each other. When the weather allows, we will make use of the playground and other outdoor spaces around the Fellowship House. Please register here for RE: <https://forms.gle/jxXsKAjCMUF6ZWaT9>

We will continue to intentionally design opportunities for youth of all ages to participate in weekly church services in the main sanctuary. Everyone can look forward to engaging in the regular Service for All Ages series, with the introduction of "Soul Work," breakout groups, and more.

RE Schedule

Note: All ages are in the Sanctuary starting at 10:30 am unless noted otherwise.

September 3: Labor Day Service for All Ages, no Religious Education

September 10: Water Ceremony Sunday, followed by Splash Party and Annual Volunteer Training 12pm—1pm

September 17: Children's and Youth Breakout Groups at 11:00 am in Fellowship House; OWL for 7th to 9th graders at noon in Dolan Lounge

September 24: Children's and Youth's Breakout Groups at 11:00 am in Fellowship House, OWL at noon in Dolan Lounge, Annual Volunteer Training 12pm - 1pm

Every Sunday 10:15—Noon: Nursery for ages six months to five years open downstairs in the Administration building (Nursery will be open until 1pm on 9/10 and 9/24 for Annual Volunteer Training)

In true UU fashion, this year's religious education garden will be organic. Have a seed of an idea you'd like to share? Want to grab a shovel and dig in? Contact us!

RE task force at RETaskforce@UUCSS.groups.io

RE Coordinator Sara Scott at recoordinator@uucss.org

Rev. Caitlin, Minister of Spiritual Growth at amsg@uucss.org

**Religious Education (RE) Task Force Members*

Emily Tien

Bobbi Pohl

Jo Dees

Sandra Sackett

Sara Scott, RE Coordinator

Rev. Caitlin Coillberg, Assistant Minister of Spiritual Growth

CONNECT

Events

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

Catoctin Weekend: October 13-15, 2023

All are welcome at the church's Catoctin weekend, which will be held the weekend October 13-15!

Don't miss it—many church-goers consider it one of the best events of the church year!

This intergenerational weekend in the mountains will include planned and impromptu activities, a campfire, and shared cooking and cleanup chores. You can come to stay over one or both nights (in heated dormitories this year!) or just spend Saturday with us. If you need help paying the registration fee, assistance is available with no questions asked.



Please register at this link: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/Catoctin23Registration>. Questions? Reach out to robin.f.moore@gmail.com.

Sunday Book Group

The book group, which welcomes all church members and friends, took the summer off, but we are reading Vladimir Nabokov's celebrated novel *Pnin*, the success of which launched Nabokov's career in the United States into literary prominence. We will meet to discuss the novel on Sunday, September 10 at 7 pm.

If you are interested in joining the group, contact Richard Lorr (rlorr4@gmail.com), get the book, and come to the next meeting.

Women's Book Group

Here are the books and meeting dates for the Women's Book Group. Please watch for upcoming all-church emails for more details.

September 18: *The Warmth of Other Suns* by Isabelle Wilkerson

October 16: *Remarkably Bright Creatures* by Shelby Van Pelt

Food Bank Donations

UUCSS collects 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). Upcoming collection dates are:

September 3

October 1

November 5

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 to donate. 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."

Committee Updates

Green Sanctuary Committee

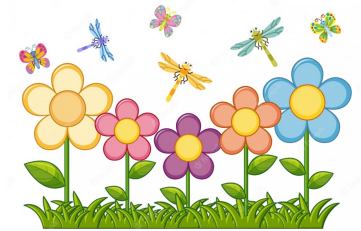
Fall Plans: Save the Dates!

September 23: Church yard cleanup!

October 8: Plant the pollinators!

TBD: Pollinator Garden dedication and festival

Green Sanctuary and the Garden Group stayed busy on the grounds this summer, weeding, watering our 13 new shade trees and 2 small pollinator gardens, and continuing to remove invasive vines and shrubs.



As the temperatures cool this fall, we look forward to removing all that black plastic (which helped smother some of that non-native groundcover) and working with the congregation to install our newest pollinator garden! Picture the area filled with more than 15 varieties of native flowering plants as well as ferns, grasses, shrubs, and bushes. The garden will also include non-plant features to attract wildlife including birdbaths and a stick pile. Garden signage will share information on the plants and how to create pollinator and other wildlife-friendly gardens at home. A Tiny Library will have books and stories with pollinator-related themes.

We plan to spend September continuing ground's clean-up and maintenance, as well as preparing the soil for new plants. Join us on Saturday morning September 23 to weed, prune, and mulch, and stay for a delicious lunch.

Put Sunday, October 8, on your calendar and stay after the worship service to help install plants in the new space. No gardening experience required. It's a fun way to learn!

Later in the fall we invite the congregation, Silver Spring Nursery School, and our church neighbors to join us as we dedicate the new garden, affirm our commitment to protecting the Chesapeake Bay watershed, and celebrate with fun and educational activities--and food! We will also have a native plant give-away.

Volunteers are always welcome--and needed! Watch the Uniter and All-Church email for updates.

Member Spotlight: Natasha Barden

Natasha Barden came to the United States from Ukraine with her family or origin in 1989 and settled in New York City. She attended New York city public schools through high school and then went on to college in upstate New York, eventually settling in Silver Spring with her former husband. A coworker at the Government Accountability Office spoke glowingly of her Virginia Unitarian Universalist church and how there was a time in each service to share joys and sorrows. This really appealed to Natasha, so she searched the internet for “Unitarian Universalism” and “Silver Spring” and found us in 2007. At her first service she was glad to find her neighbor Nicole Levesque in the congregation. Natasha saw UUCSS as both kind and welcoming and about 9 months later signed the book.

Natasha’s own religious philosophy is one of lifelong discovery, which is a particularly good fit for Unitarian Universalism. She likes that we are not exclusive. Everyone, regardless of religious beliefs, can participate. Raised in a secular Jewish household, she found our Seder to be the most meaningful in her experience. She also appreciates UUCSS as a place to raise her children. Both Ezra and Zhenya love coming to church.

Natasha was a Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU) advisor with David Uffelman the year before her son Ezra arrived. She found our youth to be passionate and insightful and still keeps up with them on Facebook. She particularly enjoyed working on the Passover Seder, on the religious education committee, and as a substitute religious education teacher. In addition to the Seder, there are other yearly events that she finds meaningful—Catoctin, the Fellowship Dinner, Water Communion, the YRUU service, the Coming of Age service, and particularly the Flower Communion. In her spare time, she bakes, gardens, reads, takes Ukrainian language lessons, and enjoys going places with her children. Natasha sees UUCSS as a source of kindness and support and loves the way we have embraced her family.

Welcome Grace Liu and Audrey Dixon, New UUCSS Staff Members!

You’ll see two new faces in the Sanctuary supporting our worship services.

Grace Liu’s first service as our new pianist was on August 20. Grace is a Taiwanese-American pianist who performs as a soloist and collaborative pianist in the U.S. and Taiwan. She was the recipient of the Pauline Favin Memorial Award in Piano and the Clara Ascherfel Accompanying Award at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. She was also a finalist and recitalist at the Wonderlic Piano Competition and Schlern International Music Competition. Grace has been invited to participate in numerous international music festivals, including the Banff Piano Masterclass (Canada), Bowdoin International Music Festival (ME), Beethoven Institute (NY), and the Schlern International Music Festival (Italy). A highly dedicated teacher, Liu currently holds faculty positions at Peabody Conservatory Preparatory School, St. James School, and the Park School of Baltimore. Grace holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the Peabody Institute, where she also received her Master of Music degree in piano performance. She completed her Bachelor of Music degree at University of California, Irvine. Grace and her husband reside in Chevy Chase.

Audrey Dixon started as our part-time Audio-Visual Technician on August 13. Audrey is a young trans woman who was born and raised in Towson, Maryland, and has been living in Greenbelt for the past two-and-one-half years with her partner. She has three years of church audio-visual experience and working alongside volunteers. She is a big proponent of community and growth. Most of her free time is spent either playing card games and board games or enjoying a scary movie. Her hope and goal in any setting she is in is to help create a safe place where people can learn and grow.

We are excited that Grace and Audrey joined our staff. Please welcome them to UUCSS when you have a chance.

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 are 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**.