

April 2024

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 at 10:30 am. 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.

Sunday, April 7: Imagining Libertatia: Paradise, Pirates, and the Work of Mutual Liberation, Rev. Caitlin Cotter Coillberg

What can we learn from pirates of the 1700s about democracy and coming together across difference to challenge inequity and the forces of capitalism and empire? Join Rev. Caitlin for a service about Early Modern Piracy, Michel Foucault, and Rev. Dr. Rebecca Parker and Rita Nakashima Brock's theological work Saving Paradise.

Sunday, April 14: Across the Aisle, Across the Kitchen Table, Rev. Kristin G. Schmidt

In this era of growing polarization, navigating relationships with friends, family members, and co-workers with radically different political or religious beliefs can be a challenge. Join us for a service about love, integrity, freedom, and how to stay connected across emotionally charged difference. During this service we will also welcome our newest members of UUCSS!

Sunday, April 21: Earth Day Sunday: Being With Trees, UUCSS Pagans, UUCSS Gardeners, and Rev. Kristin Breathe, Connect, Heal, Give Thanks. Trees give us so much, and there is a lot we can learn from them. Come to this interactive service to spend time with trees.

Sunday, April 28: Be Here, Now, Rev. Kristin G. Schmidt

Through silent, guided, mindfulness, and sung meditations this service will invite participants into the practice of presence with one's self. No prior meditation experience necessary!

INSPIRE

Minister's Column by Rev. Kristin G. Schmidt



Last year in the spring this congregation undertook a process to rearticulate our mission (purpose as a community) and our vision (our preferred future in the next 5-7 years). I have been proud to be your minister from the moment you all called me nearly four years ago, but that pride only grew when so many people insisted that we dedicate ourselves to the purpose not just of helping people, but of mutual liberation. Lilla Watson, an Aboriginal elder, activist and educator, is often credited with a quote that sums up so well why this is important. “If you have come to help me,” it reads “you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”

Religious story and imagery are full of liberation. Last month we celebrated Easter and the freedom we can claim knowing that even death cannot fell the love that binds us together. As the Spring season unfolds, the warmer temperatures and longer daylight hours liberate us from winter's grasp. And later this month, our Jewish members and friends will lead the annual UUCSS Passover Seder, which celebrates the deliverance of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt. And just as Jesus couldn't have served out his call without his friends and followers, just as Spring is an unfolding of a whole ecosystem, just as Passover impacted not just the Hebrews but also the Egyptians, freedom is something that happens not to any of us all by ourselves, but in community. From pirates to politics, trees to transgender and non-binary joy, this month in worship we will explore ways we can all get more free, together.

I also hope everyone will make time to participate in one of the three Budget Info Sessions scheduled this month. The Board has scheduled them on different days of the week and at different times to try to be as accessible as possible. Please read the article by Catherine, Board President for more details about how the budget will be changing in the 2024-2025 year. The dates, times, and locations of the info sessions are listed later on in this issue.

Message From Catherine Buckler, Board President



Spring is in the air! It's a time when your board of trustees' thoughts turn to... budgeting. As we move into this season of spreadsheets, we are so grateful for the generosity and commitment shown by our members and friends during last month's annual budget drive (ABD). We reached 99% of our goal! The board is grateful for all the hard work this represents on the part of the ABD committee and stewards. We also appreciate the thought and commitment behind each and every pledge.

Now comes the hard work of bringing our hopes and dreams into balance with our financial realities. As I mentioned last month, our community is buzzing with bright energy, new members, and big ideas these days. It feels good! And yet, we still face the same reality that most churches today are facing. The old paradigms are shifting and we are still building the new ones. It's hard to know what to count on. We've had 10 people join the church in the last couple of months! Is this a trend or just a blip? We'll soon have a lovely renovated space to offer for events. Will people want to rent it? In this liminal time, how do we make good financial decisions?

The best we can do is stay true to our values and mission. As your board plans next year's budget, we will stay focused on what we, the congregation, identified as our mission and vision through a series of church-wide conversations last year. We'll be thinking deeply about the long-term financial stability of the congregation to ensure it's here to support us and the wider community not just next year, but for years to come. We'll do our best to be transparent with our process and to listen to your concerns if they arise. And after the congregation votes on the budget at the annual meeting in June, we'll all celebrate how lucky we are to have this amazing community to share together.

As we move through this budget season, look for more information from your board about our process and join us at one of three information sessions we will offer in April (details to follow in the All-Church Email and announcements. And, as always, please reach out to us any time you have a question or suggestion!
board@uucss.groups.io.

LEARN

Upcoming in Religious Education

New Resource for Spiritual Practices in the Sanctuary

One of the things we all particularly enjoyed during our Deep Rest Workshop in March was a deck of cards titled “Rest Deck” created by Nap Ministry’s Tricia Hersey. We enjoyed it so much, that we decided it would be cool to offer this and similar decks as a resource for everyone! So we set up something new—a Card Lending Library focused on Spiritual Practices!



This is part of our focus this year on experimenting with different ways to be playful and think small while doing meaningful church things together. The concept is that there’s a couple shelves of decks of cards that can be used in support of various spiritual practices—you are invited to choose a card from a deck and use it for a week, then return that card and borrow another. Should be a simple and fun way for all of us to add a bit more intention to our day to day lives!

Religious Education for April

April 7—RE Breakout Groups study Thich Nhat Hahn: High School Youth outside (or downstairs in Sanctuary Building if weather is bad), Middle and Elementary School in Fellowship House

April 14—Children and Youth Worship Breakout Groups learn about Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg in Fellowship House

April 21—Children and Youth Worship Breakout Groups learn about Rabbi Regina Jonas in Fellowship House

April 28—Children and Youth RE Earth Day Breakout Groups talk about Pete Seeger outside

OWL 7-9 is meeting: **April 7, 14, and 28 from 12-2pm** in Dolan Lounge.

OWL 4-6 (and parent support group for OWL parents) is meeting: **April 7 and 14 from 12-1:30pm**. The last OWL 4-6 workshop will be on **April 14**. Participants and their parents/caregivers are invited to join in a celebration from 1-1:30pm.

Questions, comments, want to get involved? Email Rev. Caitlin at amsg@uucss.org or our RE Coordinator Sara Scott at recoordinator@uucss.org.

Rev. Caitlin’s “office days” are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday (and Friday and Saturday are her usual days off). Her Google Voice Number is 301-679-5832, and you can schedule zoom meetings with her via this link: www.calendly.com/revcaitlin (or reach out to schedule a coffee or what have you).

CONNECT

Events

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

Bring Food Donations Sunday April 7

UUCSS collects food donations for the food bank at the Silver Spring Christian Reform Church on the first Sunday of every month. 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 Sunday, April 7. If you will not be at church this Sunday, you can leave your donation in the kitchen, labeled "Food Bank Donation."

Women's Book Group

April 15, 2024, at UUCSS sanctuary, 7:30 pm. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston. All interested readers are welcome. Contact: Deborah Weiner, dweiner04@gmail.com.

UUCSS Yard Clean Ups for 2024—Please Mark Your Calendar Now

We have an awesome "Green Team" of gardeners that help to maintain & improve our landscaping. No task is too big or too small, as folks work together to get the work done. Tasks often include weeding, weedwacking pulling invasive shrubs and vines, laying mulch, and planting new native pollinator plants. If you like gardening—we'd love to have your help!

Mark your calendars now for 2024 clean up days—**always the second Saturday of the month!**



April 13

May 11

June 8

July 13

August 10

September 14

October 12

November 9

2024 Primary Elections Postcard Campaign

Reclaim Our Vote and Center for Common Ground, UUA partners, will begin postcard campaigns in the next couple of weeks. Defending Democracy will provide postcards, labels, and instructions. The campaigns are

aimed at getting voters out for the Georgia and Virginia primaries. Studies show that people who vote in the primaries are more likely to vote in general elections. The postcards for GA should be mailed between 4/22 and 5/9; for VA between 4/26 and 6/3.

If you are interested in sending postcards, please let Florence Fultz, UUCS Defending Democracy member, know at vogelsang5@rcn.com. Please request in multiples of ten.

Sunday Book Group

Our next meeting will be on **Sunday, April 28, at 7 pm** to discuss Zeno's Conscience by Italo Svevo at the home of Bill Wolf (301-385-1192 or b.tex.wolf@gmail.com). The book is a fictional memoir kept by the main character Zeno Cosini at the suggestion of his psychoanalyst. First published in 1923, it was highly appreciated by James Joyce and it was very successful. It is an early twentieth century example of the use of an unreliable narrator. If you want to join the discussion, get a copy of the book, read it and let Bill or Richard Lorr (rlorr4@gmail.com) know that you plan to come!

Committee Updates

UUCSS Safety Committee Announcement

On Sunday, April 21, close to the end of the Worship Service, there will be a pre-arranged fire drill so that in the event of an actual fire, all attending the service and children and youth in RE will experience how to evacuate the Sanctuary and other campus buildings safely. There will be extra Sunday support members in attendance to guide all from the building. Special arrangements will be in place to support those in wheelchairs and with limited mobility to evacuate safely.

Action In Montgomery and Our UUCSS Mission by Bob Geiger

Joining Action in Montgomery would enable UUCSS to build bonds with our community, work for social justice at the state and local level, and play an important role in defending democracy by developing resilience in our civil society.

Our new draft church mission statement calls us to "connect deeply, serve, and mobilize for our collective liberation." As church members voiced their dreams in the visioning workshops in 2023, we heard many times how folks want to connect with the diversity of our surrounding community and advocate for social justice. This is exactly what a partnership with Action in Montgomery (AIM) would allow us to do.

AIM is the biggest, most effective, and most diverse community organizing group in our area. AIM's member institutions include 24 organizations, most of whom are religious congregations. AIM's partner organizations also include 14 elementary schools where there are after-school programs that AIM successfully lobbied the county government to fund. The school where I work, New Hampshire Estates Elementary School, is one of those schools. The people who come together at AIM's meetings are white, black, Latino, Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Unitarian Universalist, young and old, highly educated and working class.

AIM works on issues chosen by its members through thousands of conversations. AIM believes in forging and exerting power to make change. And they succeed. Just one example is the set of after-school programs. When

AIM holds a candidate forum, candidates make it a priority to be there. That's because they know AIM will turn out over 1,000 people to attend the forum. Politicians know that AIM is organized, persistent, focused, and backed up by thousands of voters.

In addition to after-school programs, AIM has also won victories on getting community centers in historically African-American communities, increasing affordable housing, keeping immigrant families together, improving pedestrian safety, and fighting gun violence. AIM is currently working on affordable housing, universal pre-kindergarten, dental care, and climate change campaigns. Along with its sister organizations, it is waging a statewide campaign on housing equity, tenants' rights, and climate justice. AIM's campaigns align with our UU values. The priorities are determined by the bottom-up processes characteristic of good community organizing and the campaigns succeed by bringing together the power of many organizations.

AIM builds its organization through building relationships. Relational meetings with other AIM members are a key part of the experience. You will get to know others in our diverse community that you never would have known otherwise, and you will find common cause with them. This isn't charity. It's collective action. Or better yet, collective liberation.

Our democracy, like many around the world, is visibly wobbly these days. One reason is that many people feel like democracy is not working for them. By involving us in the conversation of choosing priorities, and exerting power through collective action to make meaningful change, AIM makes democracy work for us. Another reason that democracy is not working so well, is that for too many citizens it has become a spectator sport. AIM, on the other hand, requires that each of its member organizations commit to turning out people for key events. Lastly, as authoritarian leaders try to amass power and warp the rule of law, powerful civic organizations such as AIM are a key bulwark in defense of a free and pluralistic society.

AIM provides a great opportunity for our congregation to help defend democracy and to live out our mission of connecting deeply with others and working together for collective liberation.

We are planning two AIM Information Sessions this spring to provide members and friends of UUCSS with information about AIM and to provide you with an opportunity to ask any questions you may have about AIM and the possibility of UUCSS joining AIM. The dates, times, and locations of the meetings are listed below:

AIM Info Session

Wednesday, April 17

7:30 pm - 8:30 pm

Zoom

AIM Info Session

Sunday, May 5

12:00 pm - 1:00 pm

Sanctuary

Also, please know that you don't need to wait for any of these informational sessions to ask questions or to express interest in joining our effort to have UUCSS join AIM. You can always email me at bobandcath@prodigy.net or call at 240-801-0916.

2024-25 Annual Budget Drive a Resounding Success!



A few weeks ago, we celebrated the generosity of UUCSS members and friends and the success of our Annual Budget Drive (ABD). Our theme this year was “What Will We Bring to the Table?” and well, this community really delivered!

As of March 18, we’ve received 139 pledges totaling \$421,099 - that’s 99% of our fundraising goal of \$425,000. The ABD committee is grateful for everyone’s generosity and the high level of participation in this campaign - more than 95% of member households have pledged. Special thanks to all of the volunteers who hosted social gatherings, helped with outreach, and gave inspiring testimonies about what they value about UUCSS. We could not have reached our goal without the help of all of you!

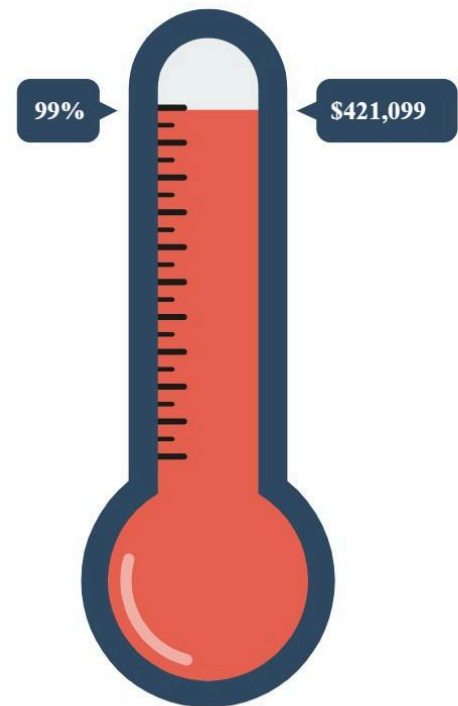
It's taken a lot of hard work, but UUCSS has taken the lessons we learned during the pandemic and is rebuilding our ministries for the future.

Sunday services are joyfully full each week, our Religious Education ministry for people of all ages is growing, long-awaited renovations on our Community Building are progressing, and excitement is growing about what UUCSS could do and how we could be of more service in our next chapter. Your financial commitments are making all of this possible - and we thank you!

Finally, a reminder: You don't have to be a member to make a pledge to donate to UUCSS. If you have benefitted from the ministries, programs, and services here at UUCSS, please make a donation. Unlike schools and libraries that are funded through tax dollars or gyms and clubs that charge fees to participate, this congregation depends primarily on donations from individuals, couples, and families to do our work in people's lives and in the community. Your support will help us serve our mission to "create joyful, spiritual community where we connect deeply, serve, and mobilize for our collective liberation."

To make your gift, you can always send a check in the mail, or just click the following link to give online. You can set up secure, one-time or recurring donations to UUCSS through the Vanco App.

GOAL: \$425,000



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Member Spotlight: Joanna Dees

Jo Dees grew up Roman Catholic; and while her parents are able to reconcile their liberal values with that strict doctrine, the more Jo learned, the less she could do so. After college, grad school, and working at an LGBT organization where she identified as an “ally,” she finally began to acknowledge she was attracted to both men and women. This helped solidify her decision not to return to Catholicism.

Jo married her husband, Aaron, and after some painful losses, gave birth to their first child, Jay. He needed a series of surgeries over his first year of life, including one near-fatal, emergency surgery that led her to quit her job and become a full-time caregiver. She gave birth to her second son, Finn, and within a couple months, her sister unexpectedly died. These life and death events all occurred during the height of Covid and, like many folks during that time, she felt isolated and fearful. Knowing Jo’s values and her desire for a community, her therapist suggested Unitarian-Universalism and she sought us out. Jo arrived at UUCSS in the midst of our plumbing apocalypse with almost no one in the sanctuary and an online service in process. She felt radically welcomed when Rev. Kristin walked down from the pulpit, during one of the hymns, to speak with her and Jay. Jo signed the book soon after.



Unitarian-Universalism was a good fit for a number of reasons. We believe in human dignity, interdependence, racial justice, and Jo felt that her sexuality was affirmed and didn’t need to be hidden. She appreciates that children are welcome in the service and there is no “crying room,” a feature of her Catholic upbringing. UUCSS is also a place where she can give back in ways that are meaningful.

During undergrad, Joanna considered becoming a professional sexuality researcher but the thought of a PhD was daunting. At UUCSS, she received training to co-facilitate Our Whole Lives (OWL) for adults. It’s an opportunity to talk about sexuality in terms of emotions and who we are as people. She also serves on the new Transgender Inclusion Task Force, which seeks to learn how to make our congregation a more welcoming community not just in name, but in action. When asked how she feels about UUCSS, she said, “Having this community—the Sunday services, the people, the working groups—it lifts me up. It makes me a better human for the humans in my life.”

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 G. 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

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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**.