



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

NEWSLETTER

August 2022

1301 Gladewood Drive
Blacksburg, VA 24060
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Message from Our Minister Rev. Pam Philips



It's hard to believe that summer is nearly over and that many of us will be returning to the routines of the school and the church year. It's a bittersweet time for many, knowing that some of the special fun of summertime will soon be over, but also anticipating the new beginnings that happen in September — new teachers and classmates, new students, new opportunities. At UUC, we'll be entering into that familiar transition between summer and autumn, but we'll also experience some novel changes due in part to the new staff members Administrator, Ericka Kelly and Director of Lifespan Faith Development, Rachel Craine, but also due to the ever-changing realities of life in the time of COVID-19 and its evolving variants. And next month we'll be joined by Ministerial Intern Anna Tulou. It is an exciting time for UUC.

As I write, Montgomery County has moved up to the High / Red Community COVID level, and the Board has voted to require masks in the building until we are back down to the Medium / Yellow. This is disappointing, but we are grateful for all the volunteers—the Worship Associates, Lucas Machi and AV volunteers, and song leaders Jennifer Thomas and Wayne Neu—who make dual-platform worship enriching for all who attend, whether at UUC or from home. As you think about your connection to UUC in the coming year, please consider lending your time and talent on Sunday mornings by [applying to become a worship associate](#). You might also want to join the choir, which will begin rehearsals on **August 17** at 7:00 pm.

August worship will bring some wonderful guest speakers to give us new perspectives and will culminate in our annual **Water Ingathering Service**. But this will be an Ingathering like no other! As always, everyone is asked to bring a small amount of water that they've enjoyed over the summer – from lakes, rivers, oceans, pools, even mud puddles or faucets. Everyone can participate, whether they attend in person or on Zoom, by sending a photograph to [me](#) ahead of time that we'll use to create a visual representation of our community. This year, we'll also be celebrating the start of the school year with a **Blessing of the Backpacks** and **Blessing RE teachers**. We'll cap off this celebration by going outdoors for more **festivities** involving **food** and **water fun**. Those who feel more comfortable gathering outdoors than in are welcome to come to the grounds after the service to join us. Please help us create this new tradition of an **Ingathering Extravaganza** by attending or contacting [me](#) or [Rachel Craine](#) to help plan the event.

Of course, all our plans will be dependent on the COVID Community Levels. Our new *routine* is to be flexible and make modifications based on how we can gather most safely AND continue to create compassionate community. As always, we ask for patience as we make our way forward. Please look for and read **Info for In-person and Virtual Sunday Service** emails to keep up to date on what to expect on Sunday mornings and twice-weekly **UUC News & Updates** emails to find other opportunities to engage in this vibrant congregation.

Looking forward to a fun and faith-filled fall,



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Staff Office Hours:

Minister:

Hours by appt.

Administrator:

Sundays 10:00-Noon

Other times by appt.

DLFD:

Hours by appt.

If you need access to the building please give 24 hours notice by emailing [Ericka](#)

Message from Our Board

Wayne Neu, Board Treasure

I am honored to have been elected to continue to serve as the UUC treasurer, for another two years, extending my tenure in that position which began last December. I am also pleased to have our new budget approved at our Annual Meeting. While our stewardship campaign fell a little short of last year's pledge total, I do have some very good news on our financial health which I'll get to in a moment.

First, in the spirit of total transparency, I have a mea culpa. As our bookkeeper was entering the new budget figures into her software, she noticed that the bottom line did not agree with what was in my spreadsheet. Apparently, as I was editing the budget spreadsheet, the summations in two of the subsections of the budget did not track the inserts and deletions as I expected. The result was that three expense line items were not included in those summations and thus were not included in the bottom line. This increased the deficit in the budget we passed by \$3200. As I pride myself on my thoroughness and accuracy, it hurts me terribly to have to confess to this error. This is an embarrassingly horrible way to begin my elected tenure but I vow not to let it happen again.



Now the good news. While the 2021-2022 fiscal year books have not yet been finalized with entries still coming in through July, it looks like we will end the year with a budget surplus on the order of \$70,000. In other words, we will have more than enough money in the bank to cover this year's budget deficit and then some. The surplus came equally from extra income and savings in expenditures. On the income side, we were fortunate to have received some large, unexpected donations, some additional pledge income, and of course, our auction exceeded expectations as it often does. On the expense side, although our Religious Education program certainly missed the services of Karen Hager when she left in November, it did lead to significant salary savings from what we had budgeted for the DLFD. In addition, not needing all we had budgeted for Rev Pam's health insurance was another source of significant savings. Several other smaller sources of savings (both this year and last) resulted from the limited use of the building during the COVID epidemic. Once the fiscal year is finalized, the board will discuss prudent uses for the money we now have in the bank. Near the top of the list will be savings for anticipated future expenses.

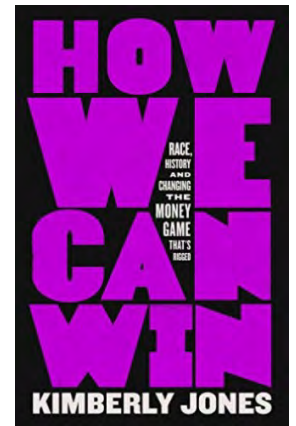
For the past three years we have made an effort to put money aside for maintenance of our building and the infrastructure. The Facilities Maintenance Escrow Fund is meant to be a source of funds for major expenses we know will come. Among them are replacement of our heat pumps (which will need to be done soon), replacing the roof, resealing the parking lot, painting the building, etc. Basically, contributions to this fund are meant to pay for the building depreciation as we go and, while we think we are currently on pace with our annual contributions, it is still currently underfunded by about \$15,000. We may wish to save a significant portion of this budget surplus just for the security it provides. We have certainly come a long way from when, shortly after COVID hit, we were calculating how much longer we would be able to meet our fixed expenses. We are very fortunate to have a congregation whose generous support has put us on such sound financial footing and I am grateful to be a part of it.

Anti-Racism at UUC NRV

By Katherine Allen, on behalf of the Anti-Racism Group

All are welcome to join us on the 2nd & 4th Sundays of the month at 1:00 PM for our ongoing group discussion addressing racism and white privilege via this [Zoom link](#). Email administrator@uucnr.org to join the listserv.

We are currently reading Kimberly Jones' book, *How We Can Win: Race, History and Changing the Money Game That's Rigged*. [Kimberly's 6 minute YouTube video](#) offers a passionate introduction to her analysis of race, class, and gender in the context of Black Lives Matter. In the video (and also in the book), Jones introduces the game of Monopoly as metaphor for how capitalism is "the real game that's been coming for Black people for 400 years". We hope you will read the book and check out the video.



Kimberly Jones has a very engaging way of speaking and writing about the history and contemporary nature of racism in the United States. Members of our Anti-Racism group agree that whether we are listening to her narrate the book on audio or reading the words ourselves, she is adept at taking highly complex issues (that have stacked the deck against Black people in this country) and rendering those issues relatable to a wider audience. As an educator and author of several young adult novels, Kimberly Jones blends her own experience as a Black mother with the social institutions that disproportionately denigrate and target people of color and her cogent analysis of the history of Black people and their communities throughout slavery, reconstruction, Jim Crow, the Civil Rights Movement, and Black Lives Matter.

In our Anti-Racism group, we have read many books and articles about critical topics such as systemic racism, white privilege, the history of policing and mass incarceration, and how the U.S. built up the white middle class with low interest housing loans at the exclusion of Black families in the mid-20th century. Our goal is to stretch beyond our own comfort zone and self-educate, build community, and engage in social justice activism on behalf of anti-racism. We find much to recommend Kimberly Jones's book for; her unabashed righteous anger and deep understanding of the injustices still being perpetuated against Black individuals, families, and communities. She also offers many strategies for change that also speak to the hope of the Black Lives Matter movement and why we as U.U. members, are committed as a faith community to educating ourselves and working toward social justice for all. Solutions she writes about with passion include abolishing the carceral system, guaranteeing the right to a good education for all children, investing in Black neighborhoods, raising the minimum wage, ensuring voting rights for all citizens, clearly defining what a hate crime is, supporting Black owned businesses, recognizing and healing racialized trauma, and making a commitment to continual self-education so that we do not shy away from the realities of oppression and privilege.

Although we only have two chapters left to discuss, we invite all to join us in this conversation. Our next meeting is **Sunday, August 14**, and we will be discussing pages 129-170. These final chapters are, "Nine Priorities for a Balanced Life" (Chapter 8), and "Hope Looks like the Future" (Chapter 9).



By Marilyn DuPont

Most of us love this time of year, harkening back to our early school years. There was a strong sense of possibility and anticipation of joy in meeting new friends. Do you remember the scent of a new box of crayons?

In the spirit of this time of potential renewal, please consider this invitation to join a Soul Matters group. Led by trained facilitators, groups of approximately eight participants meet monthly to share thoughts and feelings in a confidential setting. In the month prior to the meeting, there will be ample resources for readings to support the month's topic, as well as Sunday sermons. As the title of the program implies, we can view these prompts and meetings as a way to go more deeply into our souls or spiritual lives. Starting in September the ten topics are: Belonging, Courage, Change, Wonder, Finding Our Center, Love, Vulnerability, Resistance, Creativity, and Delight.

In the weeks to come there will be more details about the program and information about how to sign up. If you have questions, do not hesitate to contact [Marilyn DuPont](#) or [Rev. Pam](#).

Upcoming Events and Community News

August Food Pantry Donations

The Community Service Team is collecting food in the bins located near the accessible entrance to UUC. Suggested food donations to the Blacksburg Interfaith Food Pantry in August are as follows: canned tuna, canned chicken, and condensed soup. Due to the generosity of Food Pantry supporters, in June 200 households were served and 548 individuals were served. Thank you for helping to feed the hungry in our area.



UUC Piecemakers

The Piecemakers, a UUC quilting and fiber craft group that makes our paraments (those colorful pieces which cover the podium and the candle table) and quilts for any congregant in need of a tangible item of comfort welcomes newcomers of all skills. The group meets in Elarth on the 1st Thursday of each month (**August 4**) at 6:30 PM and the 3rd Saturday of the month (**August 20**) at 10 AM.



Are you between the ages of 18 and 25?

The Unitarian Universalist Young Adults Group (UUYA) meets every Tuesday in Elarth Hall from 7:00 to 9:00 PM and play games, engage with the community, and support our congregation. Once a month they hope to have an event away from UUC. For more information, contact uuya@uucnrv.org.



Ride Your Bike to UUC

Every 4th Sunday through September is **Bike Sunday**. Ride your bike to UUC, save gas, help the planet, get exercise, and be part of the biking movement.

Bike parking at UUC is available at the bike rack in the parking lot and by the Crescent Garden. Questions –contact [Susan Baker](#).

July Board Mtg. Highlights

- ♦ Covid policy was reviewed with current CDC data.
- ♦ The annual Board retreat will be on Saturday, August 27
- ♦ Discussed appointing a new at-large Board member for '22-23.

The next Board meeting will be hold on Thursday, **August 11** at 7 PM. The [minutes and reports](#) of meetings for the past two calendar years are available.

Questions, Ideas, Complaints for the Board:
Send an email to addresstheBoard@uucnrv.org.

Update on 1/2-Plate Donations

Thanks to your generosity, UUC continued its practice of helping others in both our community and beyond. The March recipients were:

July 3: Side With Love, \$161

July 10: Equality VA, \$203

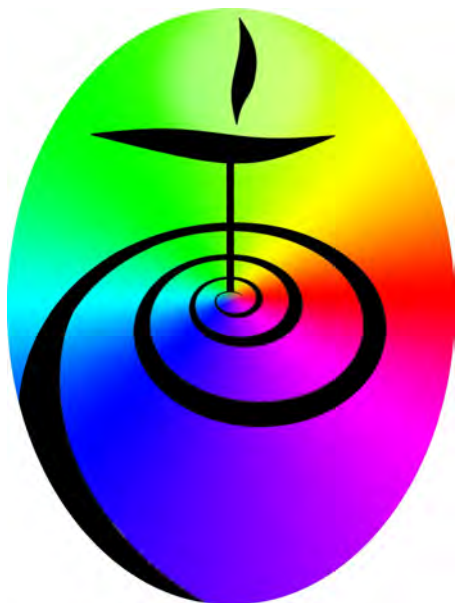
July 17: Blacksburg Interfaith Food Pantry, \$157

July 24: March For Our Lives, \$164

July 31: UU Trauma Response Ministry, \$158.50

Watch the weekly announcements and website for the coming weeks' 1/2-plate recipients. Have a suggestion—email [Ericka](#).

Check out our [Give webpage](#) for information on donating options.



Weekly Gatherings

Women's & Men's Breakfasts

All women and men are invited each Monday at UUC for coffee, breakfast (bring your own), and conversation with the men gathering from 7-9 AM and women from 7:30-9:30 AM. The two groups meet separately. Join in when you are able.

Women's Lunch

All women are welcome to join together for lunch on Fridays at 11:30 AM at local restaurants or noon at UUC. Check [online calendar](#) for locations and times for the following weeks.

Sages

Join us on the 1st & 3rd Tuesdays of the month at 2 PM at UUC for stimulating conversation on topics that affect older adults and more. If you choose not to meet in person, you can still join us on Zoom via this [link](#). All ages welcome.

Yoga

Join this free weekly group at UUC on Wednesdays at 5:30 PM. Bring a mat if you have one. To get on the email list for the weekly status of class, contact [Lori](#).

Monthly Support Groups at UUC

Parent Bereavement Support

A community-wide support group for bereaved parents and grandparents who have lost an adult or adolescent child. We come together once a month on 2nd Mondays (**August 8**) from 6-7 PM to help one another on our journeys. For more info and the Zoom link, contact [Katherine](#) or [Lisa](#).

Caregivers Support

UUC hosts a monthly support group for caregivers to share their experiences and challenges. The group meets on the 2nd Tuesdays of each month (**August 9**) from 7-8:30 PM via this [Zoom link](#). Questions or concerns - contact [Rev. Pam](#).

NAMI Support

Connections Support: Persons living with a mental illness are welcome to join this NAMI support group on the 3rd Monday of each month (**August 15**) from 6-7:30 PM. Contact [Kimberley](#) for the Zoom link or for more info.

Family Support: Family and friends of persons living with a mental illness are welcome to join this NAMI support group on the 3rd Wednesday of each month (**August 17**) from 6-7:30 PM. Contact [Kristine](#) for the Zoom link or for more info.

Transgender Support

NRV Trans Support is a peer-led organization whose mission is to offer support, resources, and social activities to all transgender and gender non-conforming individuals in the NRV in a supportive, anonymous and affirming environment. To learn more, visit their [website](#). Two different support groups meet monthly, and both groups are sponsored by UUC.

The **NRV Trans Adult Group** meets on 1st Thursdays (**August 4**) from 7-8:30 PM and 3rd Saturdays (**August 20**) from 1-2:30 PM and welcomes all adults who identify under the trans umbrella or are questioning their gender. For more information about these meetings, contact nrvtrans@gmail.com.

The **Youth & Families Group** meets on the 4th Tuesdays (**August 23**) from 6:30-8 PM and is for anyone under 18 who identifies under the trans umbrella or who is questioning their gender. The group is also for parents who have trans or gender non-conforming children. Parents are welcome with or without their children. The group provides resources, advice, and support for children and their families. For more information about these meetings, contact <https://heshezewe.org/contact/>

Lifespan Faith Development

Children's RE



Save the Date!

*Kick off the new year in
RE together*

August 28

*Backpack Blessing during a
special service for all ages*

2022-23 Registration is now open

Families registered in 2020-21 have been sent a pre-filled registration link via email to make registering easier. New families can register at <https://forms.gle/ohdNqVGQJUFdd5eu8>.

Please register ASAP to help with fall planning.

Classes start September 11

Summer RE continues through August 14!

Classes will take place outdoors on the UUC grounds, weather permitting. Families should continue to check-in with LFD staff in the downstairs lobby between 9:45-10:00 a.m. *Children do NOT go into the sanctuary before classes.*

PreK: Our preschool class is engaging in free play on the UUC playground throughout the summer.

Grades K-5: Our kindergarten through fifth graders are learning about *Holidays & Holy Days*. The curriculum, adapted to take place outdoors, explores a variety of religious festivities and emphasizes how Unitarian Universalists draw from different sources for inspiration and wisdom.

Grades 6-8: Middle school is on summer break.

The UUC Nursery is Open: Nursery care will be offered every Sunday throughout the summer.

On-Going Adult RE Programs

Anti-Racism Group

Meets the second and fourth Sunday 1:00-2:00 p.m.

All are welcome to join our ongoing discussion group on white privilege and racism. Topics are announced via email. Email dlfd@uucnrv.org to join the listserv to receive links to the discussion articles. [Zoom link](#).

Meditation Group

Meets Tuesday 5:00-6:00 PM

Our meditation group meets weekly for those interested in starting or deepening their meditation practice. Our format is drop-in, so you need not attend all sessions. Open with centering words and basic instruction, followed by sitting practice. Meditators from all traditions and all levels of experience are welcome. [Zoom link](#).



Conversations on Our Faith

Meets Wednesdays 12:00-1:00 p.m.

Join our conversation as we read the book, *The Quest for a Moral Compass: A Global History of Ethics* by Kenan Malik. All are welcome, even if you have not read the chapters of the book under discussion. To learn more, contact Tim Pickering.

Sunday Circle and Community Conversations will resume in September

Looking for something to read?

Check out the [UUC library](#). Find books on:

- Religious Teachings & History
- Spirituality / Theology
- UU Identity
- Social Responsibility
- Life Skills

Our Adult Library is located upstairs by the rear lobby, and our Children's Lobby is located downstairs in the hallway. All congregants are welcome to check out books; please refer to the process posted in the Library for instructions on checking out and returning books.



[View](#)

AROUND THE GROUNDS

By Susan Baker

We are grateful that Jim Flowers has volunteered (no arm twisting or begging) to be the new chairperson of the UUC Grounds Ministry. Jim will be bringing his management skills, landscaping and lawn care experience, and enthusiastic leadership to the position. Susan and Denise will continue to be involved with grounds care but on a limited basis. Due to injury, Jim will not be doing maintenance work on the grounds and with the reduced involvement of Susan and Denise, the UUC grounds are still at a bit of a crossroads.

The need for grounds help is as follows:

1) individuals to take on specific tasks to be done on a regular basis or ad hoc basis. (e.g. mowing the driveway entrance and the playground, weed whacking the slopes on the upper big parking lot; hedge trimming with a cordless hedge trimmer, etc.)

2) Most critical is the need for a leader/captain/czar (use whatever title you like) for each of the designated five zones of the UUC property. The five zone leaders will be responsible for the maintenance of his/her zone. The zones could be headed by a family or a group of friends or managed solo. Even more enticing is the fact that the work can be done any time of the week and the leader gets the benefit of healthy work, done outdoors.

"Heaven is in the dirt." Are we begging for leaders? YES! Are we arm twisting? Not yet, but the "twisting" is getting close. For more detailed information, please contact [Susan Baker](#) or [Jim Flowers](#)

If you have not been on the UUC grounds in the past month, here are some of the things you've missed. We love having people enjoy the UUC grounds for walking, picnicking, meditation and meetings.



Sharon Day deadheading in the garden.



Mosaic yard art by Denise Martin

Volunteers, Judy Furr, Jane Mahone and Brigitte Flowers learning methods of watering the potted plants.



AROUND THE GROUNDS CONT.

I've been working on the UUC grounds for 11 years and during that time, have had the pleasure of seeing many beneficial improvements – more than 21 new trees planted, new features added (e.g. picnic area with picnic tables; memorial walkway to honor influential Unitarian Universalists over several centuries, fire circle with benches, large storage shed), and three bee hives put in place. Here are some “then and now” photos of progress having been made.



Then

Bob Stimson and George Lally constructing driveway entrance sign with help from Dean Mook, Dick Luke, and Joe Powers.



The completed entrance sign is welcoming

Now



Then

The shelter in its non-glory days

The shelter with protective vinyl siding and painted framing.

Now



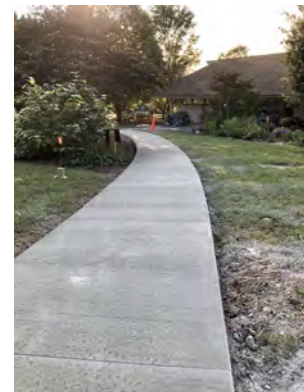
Then

New sidewalk to the Memorial Garden being installed courtesy of the Memorial Garden Committee.



The completed sidewalk is a huge improvement

Now



PLEASE INQUIRE ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITY to become a zone leader. This is a very critical need, for more information contact [Susan Baker](#) or [Jim Flowers](#)



Unitarian Universalist Congregation Sunday Services August 2022

Services are now in person at UUC and virtual via [Zoom](#) at 10 AM.
We welcome you to join us.

**Join our dual-platform service each Sunday at 10 AM
both in person at UUC or via this [Zoom link](#).**

August 7: *Being There: The Power of Presence*, Patty Raun and Worship Associate, Ellen Plummer. As we attempt to emerge from a time of "social distance" and isolation we may need to strengthen the capacities required to be fully present with one another. What are the responsibilities and joys of being with another person? What does (re)entering into community require of us? How can we grow our ability to be fully present? What might a deeper sense of awareness allow us to discover about ourselves and others? Guest facilitator, Patty Raun, will lead the gathered congregation through reflections and experiences focused on the power of presence.

Patricia Raun is the founding director of the Center for Communicating Science at Virginia Tech and professor of theater in the School of Performing Arts. During her years as a professional actor Raun was inspired to discover ways to develop skills of connection and communication in scientists, engineers, and health professionals. As a theater voice specialist, her mission is to promote positive transformation by developing healthy and varied voices—both literal and figurative—in individuals, institutions, and communities.

August 14: *Purposeful Kindness*, Jennifer Springsteen and Worship Associate, Ellen Plummer. Practicing kindness requires special attention. What does it mean to consider kindness as an integral dimension of our relationships? Join guest speaker Jennifer Springsteen and Worship Associate Ellen Plummer as we explore how we might fully explore what it means to be a community of kindness.

Jennifer Springsteen is a writer and co-founded a literary arts organization in Portland, Oregon. Jennifer is studying to be a UU minister and is a classmate of Ellen's at Starr King School for the Ministry.

August 21: *Everyone has a gift: our first principle in practice*, Victoria Taylor and Worship Associate, Gretchen Luke. As an everyday human, Victoria Taylor has come to notice that it can be challenging to always respect the inherent worth and dignity of all in our thoughts and actions. She will share her musings on the subject and some insights on putting the first principle into practice - not least of all, with how we treat ourselves.

August 28: *Ingathering Extravaganza*, Rev. Pam with Director of Lifespan Faith Development, Rachel Craine. Our annual Water Ingathering Service, with some new twists to make it more inviting for all. We'll celebrate the beloved Unitarian Universalist tradition - everyone bringing water to pour into a community bowl to symbolize our congregation coming back together - and our more recent tradition of everyone sending in photographs of beloved water. Students of all ages are invited to bring their backpacks to be blessed. We'll also bless the teachers who will be serving in our religious education program. The service will culminate with outdoor festivities - food and water fun!

Our Mission

Inspire. Create. Transform.

Inspire spiritual and ethical growth. **Create** compassionate community.
Transform our community and the world through courageous love.

Our Vision

UUC will be a beacon of liberal religion in the New River Valley. We will join with other organizations and faiths to work for just causes.