



Newsletter

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December 2022

As we enter the month of December, we are invited to travel down a **Path of Wonder**. Wonder seems a fitting theme to explore in a month full of holidays and holy days. The month kicks off with UUC participating in the [Blacksburg Holiday Parade](#) on Friday, the 2nd. It has been a wonder to witness the transformation of a trailer into a rainbow-colored float festooned with snowflakes, lights, and flags. Thanks to all those who participated in this creation – especially the UUYA's (UU Young Adults). You can choose to walk the parade route, handing out candies, or to cheer from the sidewalk. Either is a wonderful way to get into the holiday spirit *and to let people in our community know about UUC*.



The month continues with several opportunities to celebrate together at UUC – from the [Holiday Singalong](#) on Saturday the 3rd up at the upper firepit, the [Holiday Party and Family Movie Night](#) on the 16th, the multigenerational [Solstice Celebration](#) in Elarth and up on the Labyrinth on the evening of the 21st, the traditional Christmas Eve service on the 24th, and a non-traditional Sunday service with breakfast on the 25th. Choose whatever most feeds your soul. From raucous and loud to solemn and silent, these events and services invite us to step outside the usual and ordinary to the wonderful and extraordinary.

And as wonder-filled as all these experiences may be, whether at UUC or with friends and family, there is something to be said for stepping outside all the busy-ness that December can bring to simply sit, breathe, and take in the everyday wonders in our lives. Moving down the Path of Wonder might include going outside to gaze at the night sky full of stars and contemplating our place in the universe, or simply staring at one's own hand, with its lines and creases, and marveling at all the things it can do and feel. It might mean looking back at the times of our lives, seeing how much the world has changed since our childhoods – from typewriters to computers to cell phones and smart watches, or any number of other technological wonders – or acknowledging the ways we have grown and transformed into the people we are today. Take time to wonder about what amazes and awes you – about the world, about your life, about yourself.

And . . . as wonderful as this time of year can be, we know that *It's [not always such] a Wonderful Life. The classic holiday movie starring Jimmy Stewart reminds us that the holiday season isn't always filled with cheer. Pain, trauma, loss, and loneliness don't follow a calendar and stories don't always have happy endings. Let us be mindful of our friends and neighbors as we travel the Path of Wonder, wondering whether they might need or want connection or support as they travel their own paths and asking how we might accompany and support them. And if you find yourself on a lonely, difficult stretch of road, reach out to let us know that you could use some help or accompaniment. Contact the [Caring Network](#), the [Lay Pastoral Care Ministry](#), or [me](#).*



May the month ahead be full of wonder,

Rev. Pam

Contact Information

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Message from Our Board

By Laura Robinson



I am in awe at our congregation's willingness to wonder, ask, and deeply listen. Have you noticed that questions lead to more questions? This curiosity energizes our potential, and as a new Board Member, I am honored to feel our congregation's excitement ignite.

Our Committee on Ministries impressed me at our recent board meeting. Their report asked, "Is there any yearning in the hearts of our members that we have not been responding to?" While this was only one question of many, this resonated with me. We are a congregation that bravely asks questions and keeps asking questions. Our wonder inspires our spiritual and ethical growth, and this transforms our community.

I am also impressed with our enthusiasm for our strategic plan. I want to express our deep appreciation for the expertise of Rev. Pam Philips, Rachel Craine, and Anna Tulou. They attend each board meeting, helping us dive deep into every agenda item. For example, the Board is making progress on our Policy and Procedure Review project, and we have reviewed examples of congregational organization structures.

Let's inspire wonder in others and spread our rainbow. Please help us bring joy and awareness of social justice issues by supporting our float at the Blacksburg Holiday Parade.

As a friendly reminder, you can find the Board meeting minutes and agenda in the Members Area online. The agenda always includes time for any UUC member to speak. If you have something you want to pass on to the Board, feel free to contact any of us. We are here to serve you.

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

November Board Meeting Highlights

- *The Board approved the revisions to policies and procedures for the Communications and Finance.*
- *The Strategic Plan recommended having an outreach committee "responsible for building and fostering relationships between the congregation and local groups"*

The next Board meeting will be hold on Thursday, **December 8** 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@uucnr.org.

Events & Community News

Support a Family at WRC this Christmas

UUC is again participating in the Womens' Resource Center of the NRV "Support a Family at Christmas" program. Please use this [link](#) to purchase any items on the children's wish lists. If you prefer to donate money and have us shop for you, use that option found on the link. Unwrapped gifts are to be brought to UUC by **Wednesday, December 7th** and placed in the marked bin located under the coat rack in the main foyer. Please indicate on the package which child is to receive your donation. For additional information contact [Lisa Evanylo](#) or [Pauletta Copenheaver](#). Thank you for your generosity.

November 1/2-Plate Donations

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

November 6: Montgomery County Christmas Store, \$337.26

November 13: Blacksburg Presbyterian Woodchucks, \$209.83

November 20: We Are The Above, \$253.70

November 27: Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, \$383.42

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

Join Us for a Holiday Sing-along

All ages are welcome to gather at our upper firepit on Saturday, **December 3** from 6-7:30 PM to sing favorite Christmas carols and some well-known ballads. Jim Kern will play guitar and lead us in song around the blazing firepit. Song lyrics will be provided. Refreshments served, and all are welcome to bring their favorite holiday treats to share. Bring a flashlight as it will be dark. In case of rain, the event will be moved indoors.

Anti-racism Group begins

The 1619 Project

Join Katherine Allen and Annette Burr via this Zoom [link](#) on Sunday, **December 11** from 1:00-2:00 PM as they begin discussing the award-winning book, The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story, edited by Nikole Hannah-Jones, et al. (published in 2021 by One World). They will begin with the Preface and Chapter 1, but if you haven't yet obtained the book, come anyway. Additionally, you do not need to have participated in the Anti-racism Group before, to join in.

Annual Holiday Parade

Come out and support the UUC float at the Blacksburg Holiday Parade! Friday, **December 2** at 7p.m. Downtown Blacksburg.





Events & Community News

December Cold Moon Ritual

Wednesday, **December 7**, The EarthSpirit Sisters invite women to join us at the Cauldron of Stars for the last full moon of 2022. We will meet at the fire circle on the UUC grounds at 6 p.m. Please dress warmly. After our ritual, we will have some social time indoors. Snacks and drinks are welcome, but we always have plenty.

Contact [Kimberley](#) with questions or if you'd like to help.

Second Sunday Potluck

December 11 at 11:30 AM

Everyone is invited to stay following the service on Sunday, if Montgomery County is not in the red zone for Covid, to enjoy a delicious meal together plus meet and greet old and new friends. Bring the family, bring your friends – and bring a dish to share, twice the amount for your family unit. Please include a small card with the ingredients for those with allergies.

December Food Pantry Donations

During the month of December, UUC's Community Service Team encourages our congregation to participate in the Reverse Advent Calendar activity. This program is one of the many social action activities organized by our Director of Lifespan Faith Development, Rachel Craine. Please see [page 8](#) in this newsletter for daily/weekly suggested items.



Social Justice at UUC

Staff at Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy (VICPP) are busy preparing for the 2023 Virginia General Assembly Session which runs from **Jan.11-Feb 24**. VICPP legislative priorities for 2023 include:

Criminal Justice Reform

- Limit the use of solitary confinement.
- End profiteering in jails.

Health Equity

- Unconscious bias training requirement.

Worker and Family Support

- Paid sick days.
- Childcare assistance.

Affordable Housing

- Increase funding to the Virginia Housing Trust Fund.
- Invest in the Housing Stability Fund.
- Increase funding to stop evictions.
- Tenant protections.

Common Sense Gun Reforms

VICPP is a non-partisan coalition of more than 750 faith communities (our congregation being one) working toward a more just society. For details on the 2023 legislative priorities click on this [link](#)

The new Social Justice Team wants to know what you feel called to change in the world. Take their brief [survey](#) to let them know what social justice issues you are interested in addressing.

**Check Covid Community levels before
outing [here](#).**

Anti-Racist Practice Group

SAVE THE DATE: **Tuesday, January 17th at 7pm – 8:30pm** on Zoom
Blacksburg Presbyterian, Blacksburg Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Blacksburg
United Methodist edges and Church St. campuses
Register [here](#).

As we work to dismantle oppression in our lives and congregations, we need to come alongside others who are practicing anti-racism in order to gain new insights, offer support, and receive feedback on our efforts. During this 90-minute workshop, our congregations will come together with the common goal of identifying, reflecting on, and ultimately, interrupting racism in ourselves and our organizations. These gatherings will include new case studies appropriate for both first-time and previous participants.

This will be a brave space to reflect, discuss, learn, grow, and most importantly, keep ourselves and our congregations accountable as we continue to work towards dismantling white supremacy in all the spaces that it lives, even (and especially) when that space is inside of us.

It is important to note that a significant focus of this space will be to:

- Raise white consciousness
- Uncover internalized white supremacy
- Learn how one shows up in whiteness
- Identify microaggressions and practice micro-interventions
- Work to interrupt racism in ourselves and our communities

We hope you'll mark your calendars now and plan to join us!



INTERNSHIP COMMITTEE

Anna Tulou's ministerial internship here at our congregation includes the formation of a lay committee which is tasked with working with her during her two years with us. The committee is up and running, and includes among its charge from Anna's school, Meadville Lombard Theological School, attention to all areas of parish church life. Our goal is to provide Anna with reflection in those areas in a supportive environment.

We are inviting feedback from our members and friends at any time it seems appropriate and useful. You may do so by speaking with or contacting any member of the committee, or directly with Anna herself. An important part of feedback, however, is that it may not be anonymous.

The members of the committee are Akiko Nakata, David Warner, Mindy Quigley, Kendra Mcallister, Dick Luke, and myself. You are invited to contact [Anna](#) as well, but please be mindful of her family time, specifically each weekday afternoon between 4 and 6, and Saturdays. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

[Marilyn DuPont](#), Chair

WEEKLY GATHERINGS

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.

UUYAs

If you're between the ages of 18 and 25, the UUYAs (Universalist Unitarian Young Adults) meets every Tuesday in Elarth Hall from 7:00 to 9:00 PM to 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@uucnr.org.

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.

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. 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 (**December 12**) 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 (**December 13**) 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 1st (**December 5**) and 3rd Monday (**December 19**) of each month 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 (**December 21**) 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 support groups meet monthly, and both groups are sponsored by UUC.

The **NRV Trans Adult Group** meets on 1st Thursdays (**December 1**) from 7-8:30 PM and 3rd Saturdays (**December 17**) 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 **Families Group** meets on the 4th Tuesday (**December 27**) from 6:30-8 PM and is for parents and/or caregivers who have trans or gender non-conforming children. The group is also for anyone under 18 who identifies under the trans umbrella or who is questioning their gender. Parents are welcome with or without their children, but children must be accompanied by a parent or caregiver. The group provides resources, advice, and support for families. For more information about these meetings, contact nrvtransfamily@gmail.com. To ensure the safety and privacy of families, all interested families must meet with one of the facilitators.

Lifespan Faith Development

Holiday Party & Family Movie Night

Friday, December 16, 6-9pm

Come to UUC on December 16 to celebrate the holidays with hot chocolate and cookies. There will be stations set up in Elarth to create holiday ornaments.

In the sanctuary, holiday classics will be playing: "The Grinch Who Stole Christmas," "Charlie Brown's Christmas," "Frosty the Snowman," and "Rudolph the Red-Nose Reindeer." Lucas will make his soon to be world famous popcorn.



Children's RE continues to meet for children in preschool through middle school. Children spend the first 15 minutes in the service and then are sung down to their classes.

[Register Here](#)

There will be no children's RE classes or YRUU on December 25 or January 1

YRUU Goes to the Mountain

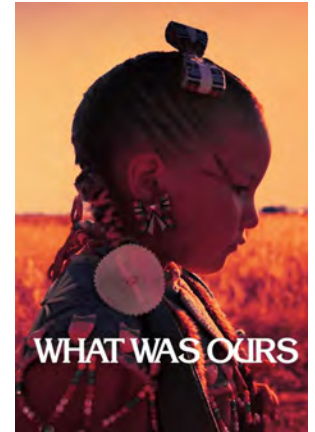
Our high school youth will be traveling to the Mountain Retreat and Learning Center in North Carolina for a youth CON December 9-11. A Youth Conference is a gathering of Unitarian Universalist youth and advisors from congregations all over the southeast (and sometimes beyond!) for a weekend program filled with a variety of workshops, activities, good food, a safe environment and warm, cozy cabins. Youth participate in all the activities, share with new friends in small get-to-know-you groups, bond during free time, contribute to times of fun and reflection and grow spiritually through worship.



Social Justice Film Series

What Was Ours: , December 3— 7:30 pm

An Eastern Shoshone elder and two Northern Arapaho youth living on the Wind River Indian Reservation attempt to learn why thousands of ancestral artifacts are in the darkness of underground archives of museums and churches, boxed away and forgotten. Like millions of indigenous people in many parts of the world, they do not control their own material culture. It is being preserved, locked away, by 'outsiders' who themselves do not know what they have.



Holiday Pageant and Buddy Reveal

December 18

You won't want to miss the UUC's production of "Charlie Brown's Christmas." Kids of all ages will love this fun, and slightly chaotic, service! Act in our play or just enjoy the performance of others.

Afterwards, participants in the Buddy Project will meet their buddy. All are invited to the lower level for refreshments and holiday crafts.



Help Wanted: The Sunday Circle Program is looking for a new coordinator for the 2023-24 year. Interested? Contact Rachel Craine at dlfd@uucnr.org

December Social Action Project—Reverse Advent

Each day, add an item to a box. After Christmas, donate the entire box to the Interfaith Food Pantry, or drop it off at UUC and we'll take it there for you. Total cost of these items is about \$1/day.

December 1: canned vegetable

December 11: rice

December 21: canned soup

December 2: canned fruit

December 12: dried beans

December 22: mac and cheese

December 3: spaghetti sauce

December 13: Hamburger Helper

December 23: canned tuna

December 4: pasta noodles

December 14: canned vegetable

December 24: dried beans

December 5: cereal

December 15: canned fruit

December 25: Hamburger Helper

December 6: canned tuna

December 16: spaghetti sauce

December 7: peanut butter (16 oz)

December 17: pasta noodles

December 8: jelly

December 18: cereal

December 9: canned soup

December 19: peanut butter (16 oz)

December 10: mac and cheese

December 20: jelly



The Interfaith Food Pantry is located at 706 Harding Ave in Blacksburg. Donation hours are Mon / Tues 4-5:30 pm and Wed / Thur 10-11:30am. IFP is closed Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Year's Day. Learn more about IFP at <http://newrivercommunityaction.org/IFP/>

On-Going Adult RE Programs

Sunday Circle

Meets Sunday 8:30-9:30 AM. In Library and on Zoom

December 4: Responding to Conflict and Division in Transformative and Restorative Ways

In this interactive discussion, Henry Yampolsky, a professional mediator, will challenge our perceptions of conflict. He will talk about how to respond to conflict with strength, clarity, and compassion, as opposed to reacting to it with fear, avoidance, or aggression.

December 18: Family Relationships in Later Life: Love, Loss, and Resilience

Fred Piercy and Katherine Allen, emeritus professors of Human Development and Family Science at Virginia Tech, will share insights about the deep connections and losses we experience in our families that often become more entangled as we age. They will address ways of facing the inevitable joys and challenges of family and close relationships with courage, grace, and resilience.

Anti-Racism Discussion Groups

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

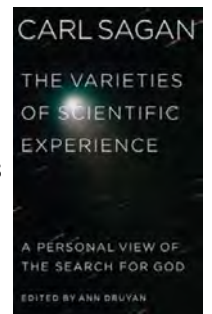
Our meditation group meets weekly for those interested in starting or deepening their meditation practice. Our format is drop-in, so you need not attend all sessions. Open with centering words and basic instruction, followed by sitting practice. Meditators from all traditions and all levels of experience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



Conversations on Our Faith

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

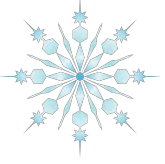
Join our conversation as we read the book, *Varieties of Scientific Experience: A Personal View of the Search for God*, by Carl Sagan. All are welcome, even if you have not read the chapters of the book under discussion. To learn more, contact Tim Pickering.



Reproductive Justice Workshop

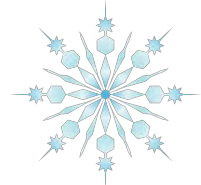
December 3 & 17—7:00-8:30pm

This six-session workshop concludes in December. For more information, email dlfd@uucnrv.org.



'Round the Grounds

By Jim Fowers



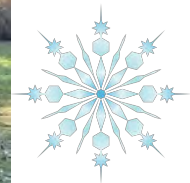
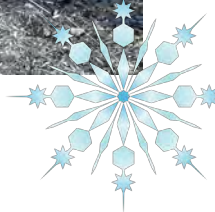
Our Grounds are now wrapped tightly in winter gray, hunkered down for a slumber of rest and recovery. Still, they can be enjoyed in the stillness and openness of this leafless season.



The Glades, in particular, with the summer grasses trimmed back, reveal the thoughtful promise of their unique designs. The labyrinth is fully visible, and ready to comfort anyone in a meditative mood. The Maypole is furled, waiting for the spring, but clearly poised for its next joyous awakening. The once-hidden pond is expecting a re-birth in 2023, which will include a gurgling fountain, and perhaps some live inhabitants. Dry now, it still welcomes contemplative visitors during this quiet time. And the firepit stands ready to provide a warming circle of community, perhaps including s'mores.



We encourage everyone to bundle up and enter into the special wonder of this part of the natural year.



Winter Solstice Celebration

December 21st

As our ancestors from the northern hemisphere have done on the solstice since the beginning of time, let us meet the cold and dark with the warmth and light that dwells within.

Meet at Elarth Hall at 5:00 to make luminaries. We'll also spend time around the fire and walk the labyrinth, candles illuminating our way. After our walk, we'll finish with food and conversation inside.

All are welcome to this multigenerational celebration.

Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Sunday Services December 2022

Services are now in person at UUC and virtual via [Zoom](#) each Sunday at 10 AM.



December 4: *Wondering about Wonder*, Rev. Pam & Worship Associate, Earle Irwin. We'll begin our month-long exploration of the Path of Wonder by considering the relationship between being curious and our ability to appreciate the wonders of the world. We'll also welcome new members to the congregation. If you have found your spiritual home here and want to become a member, contact Rev. Pam to join in this recognition.

December 11: *Why Wonder?*, Rev. Pam & Worship Associate, Gretchen Luke. In this "most wonderful time of the year," we'll explore the role of wonder in our religious and secular lives.

December 18: *It's a Wonderful Charlie Brown Christmas*, Director of Lifespan Faith Development Director, Rachel Craine and Rev. Pam. Join us for our annual multigenerational unrehearsed play, this time exploring the meaning of Christmas with beloved characters from cartoonist Charles Schulz and listening to Jared Gibbs play the jazz tunes of Vince Guaraldi.

December 24 at 5:30 PM: *Christmas Eve Service*, Rev. Pam & Ministerial Intern, Anna Tulou, and Kristine Reid. Come celebrate with traditional stories and songs that help us appreciate the wonder of this most holy night.

December 25: *Filling our Lives with Wonder*, Rev. Pam & Worship Associates, Cynthia Baute and Victoria Taylor. We'll gather this morning for a non-traditional service – sharing stories and music to fill our souls with "tidings of comfort and joy" and a breakfast meal to fill our bodies. (Watch for more information)



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.