



# Newsletter

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## May 2023

The month of May will be a time of celebration as the congregational year winds down. We'll begin by celebrating the transitions of our young people, with the youth in our *Coming of Age* program sharing some of what they've learned this year about their beliefs and being welcomed into the high school youth group. The YRUU youth will also share their experience as *Young Religious UU's* by sharing music and traditions of The Mountain, the retreat and learning center they've visited, and saying goodbye to the graduating seniors with the **Bridging Ceremony** into young adulthood. We are so blessed as a congregation to have youth and young adults who stay connected to this community, encouraging our faith and hope in the present and the future with their ideas and enthusiasm.



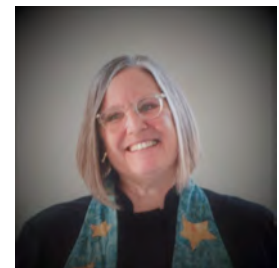
The next Sunday, Mother's Day, we'll hold a **Child Dedication** ceremony. While Unitarian Universalists don't often participate in the ritual of baptism, we do take seriously our commitment to parents and children to help nurture their young lives, helping them to grow with the support and care of the whole community. If you have children you would like dedicated, please contact [Rev. Pam](#), whether you will be attending the service that day or not. If there is enough interest, we'll have another child dedication in June. The third Sunday in May marks what we hope will be a new tradition – our celebration of the uniquely Unitarian Universalist ritual of the **Flower Ceremony** while the children are still coming on Sundays for their RE classes. This marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Flower Ceremony, introduced by Rev. Norbert Capek to his congregation in Czechoslovakia. He asked each of his congregants to bring a flower to the Sunday service, which they put in a vase to create a beautiful bouquet. At the end of the service, everyone takes a different flower home. His wife Mája brought this ritual to the Unitarian Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1940, and it has become a beloved tradition to UU congregations ever since. We want all our children to experience the beauty and joy and remind everyone to bring at least one flower per person to the service. We'll also celebrate the gift of service of all those who volunteer in our RE program that day.

And finally, we'll mark Memorial Day on the fourth Sunday. This will be a multi-generational service on this unofficial first day of summer. The next week, the children will start services in their classes, using Legos to explore their Unitarian Universalist identities – Lego UU.

That next week, June 4<sup>th</sup>, we'll celebrate the newest members with a **New Member Recognition** during the service. If you feel that you have found your spiritual home and want to join, please contact [Rev. Pam](#). New members who want to vote at the annual Congregational Meeting after the service will need to sign the book by May 21<sup>st</sup>. We will be electing new executive board members and voting on the annual budget. As I write this message, we have just celebrated the official end of our pledge drive. Thanks to the generosity of those who pledged and increased their pledges, we have \$327,432 toward our goal of \$376,000 (only 87%). The board and finance committee will meet to make cuts from the proposed budget on May 10<sup>th</sup>, so there is still time for folks to [make a pledge](#) or increase their pledge by emailing our administrator, [Ericka Kelly](#). We appreciate the generosity and dedication of all those who participated in stewardship this year, particularly the committee led by Carol Kern.

We have much to celebrate as a congregation. We hope you'll join in these celebrations in the month ahead.

With gratitude,  
Rev. Pam



## Contact Information

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## Message From Our Board



Many of you know that I am retiring on May 10, and have joined me in laughter as I have been counting down the days for the last couple of weeks. 'Tis the season of transition for so many of us – graduations, weddings, births, deaths, moves, diagnoses, and retirements are the “big” transitions, but all transitions feel big as they happen.

I am fortunate to be well trained by mentors and friends in managing and celebrating transitions. I have also been fortunate to love my professions: teaching for 2 years, school counseling for 18, and faculty for 22. I anticipate and look forward to loving the rest of my life in retirement as well. I know that I will spend more time with grandchildren in Michigan and Chicago, travel (August to Scotland and Norway!), continue involvement with the UUC in some form, and work on some local campaigns at least through the fall. These are familiar, though, I am also looking forward to creating what I cannot yet anticipate.

As I prepare for May's theme of *Creativity*, I appreciate words from the SGM packet by Peggy Taylor: “Creativity is our ability to dream things up and make them happen;” by James Baldwin: “The world is before you, and you need not take it, or leave it, as it was when you came in;” and by Anne-Marie Willis: “We design our world, while our world acts back on us and designs us.” These words resonate with being in transition. Whatever transitions we find ourselves in this month, approaching them with creativity will hopefully result in making dreams happen, in finding and leaving the world different than what we currently experience, and in finding ourselves changed as well.

Transition well friends,

Nancy, President

## Staff Office Hours

**Minister:**  
Tues-Thurs 9:00-1:00pm by appointment

**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](mailto:Ericka)

## May Board Meeting Highlights

- This year's annual meeting will be held **June 4**, after service.
- The board is working on a new UUC Organizational Structure.

The next Board meeting will be held on Thursday, **May 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 [adresstheBoard@uucnrv.org](mailto:adresstheBoard@uucnrv.org).



# Events & Community News



**May 14 at 11:30 AM**

## Second Sunday Potluck

Everyone is invited to stay and enjoy a potluck after the service on Sunday, May 14th. Bring your family and friends, and a dish to share (enough for eight), to enjoy a delicious meal together. Please include a small card with the ingredients for those with allergies.

## Child Dedication

We will have a Child Dedication ceremony on Sunday, **May 14th**. If you would like your child dedicated, please contact [Rev. Pam](#) (If you are unable to attend the service on the 14th, we may have another ceremony on June 18th)



## April 1/2-Plate Donations

Thanks to your generosity, UUC continued its practice of helping others in both our community and beyond.

**April 2:** Mont. Co. Animal Care & Adoption, \$214.71

**April 9:** Mont. Co. Humane Society, \$182.67

**April 16:** Appalachian Mountain Advocates, \$240.25

**April 23:** UU Ministry for Earth, \$229.00

**April 30:** Appalachian Voices, TBD

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

## Article II Amendment

### Discussion Workshops

For those who are interested or concerned about the proposed changes to the UUA Bylaws – replacing the 7 Principles and 6 Sources with values and statements of covenant – you are invited to attend Amendment Discussion Workshops hosted by the UUA Board on May [11<sup>th</sup>](#), [18<sup>th</sup>](#), and [21<sup>st</sup>](#). Click on the dates to register, and find more information [here](#).

## New Member Ceremony

Have you been attending UUC for a while now and perhaps feel ready to take the next step on your spiritual journey by becoming a member of the congregation? On Sunday, **June 4**, we will welcome new members into the congregation during the service. If you would like to participate in this ceremony, contact [Rev. Pam](#) (or 552-9716) by June 1 so that we are prepared to welcome you.

Please note that we will hold our **Annual Congregational Meeting** following the service on this Sunday. If you wish to vote at the meeting in person or by proxy, you must have signed the membership book by May 21 by meeting with Rev. Pam. Even if you sign the book before June 4, you are encouraged to participate in the ceremony.



# Events & Community News

## Summer Newsletter

UUC is experimenting with a quarterly newsletter! This will include the months of June, July, and August. Any articles or requests you'd like to see in that publication will be due to [Ericka](#) on the May 25th deadline.

## May Food Pantry Donations

UUC's Community Service Team's May suggested food donations for the Blacksburg Interfaith Food Pantry to include the following items: canned fruit, preferably in juice or low sugar.



As of late March, 1083 individuals are registered to receive monthly food assistance. Your donations are appreciated by the customers and the volunteers.

## THE AUCTION COMMITTEE NEEDS YOUR HELP!

Our last auction was a few short months ago, but we're already getting ready for our next one in October! We can't do this alone, so we're reaching out to gather names for those who would be willing to help us out, big or small. Whether your specialty is designing/assembling grand displays, working with the behind-the-scenes technologies that make everything flow well, or anything in between, we need your help. You will be able to spend as much or as little time as you'd like and are able. If you'd like to help the auction committee make this upcoming auction as successful as the last, please send an email to me, [Chris Long](#).

## Death with Dignity

"You only die once, we're here to make sure you have a choice in the matter."

On Saturday, **May 20th** at 10am, UUC and the Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Blue Ridge are hosting a presentation in-person and on Zoom, about the *Final Exit Network*, whose mission is "To educate qualified individuals in practical, peaceful ways to end their lives, offer a compassionate bedside presence, and defend their right to choose."

Our speaker, Kevin Bradley, will talk about having difficult conversations with family, the supplemental advance directive for dementia, and what you can do when an advance directive is not being honored. Kevin has been a volunteer with Final Exit Network since 2016, serving as a speaker, writer, editor, exit guide, spiritual advisor, and board member. Most of his professional career has been as a writer, editor, and corporate trainer. He is also a certified stress management counselor and an ordained minister with experience as a healthcare chaplain specializing in mental health, trauma, and hospice care.

Final Exit Network is committed to advancing the social acceptance of an individual's right to comfortably end their own life when faced with intractable suffering of a loss of selfhood through dementia.



## Anti-Racism Group is Continuing Our Discussion of the 1619 Project:

The Anti-Racism Group has been meeting twice a month (second and fourth Sunday) to discuss the award-winning book, *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story*, edited by Nikole Hannah-Jones, Caitlin Roper, Ilena Silverman, and Jake Silverstein, which is about the inheritance of race, caste, enslavement, privilege, and hierarchy that defines America. So far, we have read 9 chapters: (1) Democracy, (2) Race, (3) Sugar, (4) Fear, (5) Dispossession, (6) Capitalism, (7) Politics, (8) Citizenship, and (9) Self-Defense, taking one chapter at a time, in order to read, think about, feel deeply, and share with one another these history lessons--most of which we did not learn in school--that resonate in all of our lives today. Given summer schedules, we are taking a break from meeting this summer, and will begin again with Chapter 10, Punishment, on Sunday, August 27, from 1:00 to 2:00 pm on Zoom.

Learning about our nation's history from the perspective of racial oppression, resistance, and strength is equipping us with more informed ways of showing up for local and national dialogues and activism regarding race and caste. Our conversations have been co-facilitated by Katherine Allen and Annette Burr. All are welcome to attend! We hope you get a chance to read the book and to join us on August 27. Please join us, even if you haven't had a chance to read the chapters. We are learning from each other and the scholars, educators, and journalists who have authored the chapters and accompanying literary works.

## Social Justice at UUC

This has been a busy spring for the social justice teams at UUC. Some of the activities have included volunteers at Christiansburg Institute, reading and discussing *The 1619 Project*, participation in a Sunday service about acting on climate change, promotion of reusable bags (with UUC logo), film/discussion on reproductive justice, hosting a voter information forum. All are welcome to participate in ongoing activities. For more information and/or to share your ideas, contact the following team leaders:

Racial Justice – [Barbara Taylor](#)


Environmental Justice/Climate Change – [Anita Puckett](#) and [Bob Stimson](#)

Reproductive Justice – [Sara Dalton](#)

Voting Rights - [Sara Dalton](#)



## MONTHLY SUPPORT GROUPS AT UUC

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Surviving Spouses Support Group</b></p> <p>Surviving Spouses will meet at 2:00 pm in the UUC Library on the 2nd (<b>May 9</b>) &amp; 4th Tuesday (<b>May 23</b>) of the Month. If you have lost a spouse or partner and would appreciate a group with whom you can share and learn, please join us.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Caregivers Support</b></p> <p>UUC hosts a monthly support group for caregivers to share their experiences and challenges. The group meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesdays of each month (<b>May 9</b>) from 7-8:30 PM via this <a href="#">Zoom link</a>. Questions or concerns - contact <a href="#">Rev. Pam</a>.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>NAMI Support</b></p> <p><b>Connections Support:</b> Persons living with a mental illness are welcome to join this NAMI support group on the 1st (<b>May 1</b>) and 3rd Monday (<b>May 15</b>) of each month from 6-7:30 PM. Contact <a href="#">Kimberley</a> for the Zoom link or for more info.</p> <p><b>Family Support:</b> 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 (<b>May 17</b>) from 6-7:30 PM. Contact <a href="#">Kristine</a> for the Zoom link or for more info.</p>	<div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Parent Bereavement Support</b></p> <p>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 (<b>May 8</b>) from 6-7 PM to help one another on our journeys. For more info and the Zoom link, contact <a href="#">Katherine</a> or <a href="#">Lisa</a>.</p>

## 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 (Unitarian Universalist Young Adults) meet 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@uucnrv.org](mailto:uuya@uucnrv.org).

### Women's & Men's Breakfasts

All 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.

### UUC Choir

UUC Choir: All are welcome to join every Wednesday in the sanctuary from 7 to 8:30 pm. No experience is necessary. Please contact Jennifer Thomas to RSVP or to find out more.

### 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](#).

# Lifespan Faith Development

## Important Dates in RE

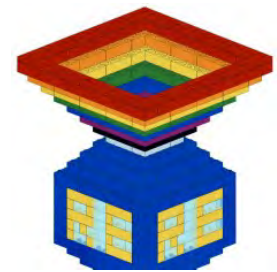
**May 7**—Youth Led Bridging Service. Come celebrate our youth who completed the Coming of Age program this year, as well as our graduating Seniors.

**May 21**—Last day of RE, Flower Communion, and Ice Cream Social.



### Summer RE Starts June 4

**K-5 Summer Program: LEGO UU  
Teachers Wanted—[Sign up here](#)**



**Sunday Fundays: Our Summer Pre-K Program.  
Easy and fun—[Sign up here](#) to help out.**

### We Need RE Teachers for Fall, 2023!

Teachers commit to a semester of teaching as part of a 4-teacher team. Each teacher leads 4 to 5 classes and assists with 4-5 classes each semester. All curriculum and nearly all prep is provided, so you spend your time doing what is most meaningful. This is only a 9 Sunday commitment!

**[To Volunteer for Fall Click Here.](#)**

### Fall 2023 Curriculum

PreK—Chalice Children

Grades K-1—Picture Book World Religions

Grades 2-3—Books and Cooks

Grades 4-5—Holidays and Holy Days

Middle School—Building Bridges

Middle School Youth Group (Friday nights, monthly)

YRUU—High School Youth Group (Sunday nights, weekly)



# On-Going Adult RE Programs

## Sunday Circle

Meets Sunday 8:30-9:30 AM. In Library and on [Zoom](#)

### May 7: Broadband Deployment, Housing Investments, and Passenger Rail Service in the New River Valley.

Kevin Byrd, Executive Director of the New River Valley Regional Commission, will discuss projects underway that will result in fiber internet connections being built to homes and businesses across the region; collaborations taking shape that will fund affordable housing initiatives; and the reintroduction of passenger rail service to the New River Valley in 2026.

### May 21: My childhood as a Jewish child in France during the Nazi occupation.

Nathan Kranowski will give an overview of French Jews and their life during WW2. He will also share his personal experience of what happened to him and his family.

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## Meditation Group

Meets Tuesday 5:00-6:00 PM

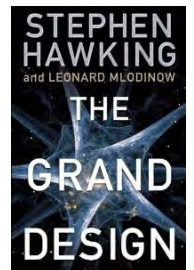
Our meditation group meets weekly for those interested in starting or deepening their meditation practice. Our format is drop-in, so you need not attend all sessions. Open with centering words and basic instruction, followed by sitting practice. Meditators from all traditions and all levels of experience 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 Grand Design* by Stephen Hawking. All are welcome, even if you have not read the chapters of the book under discussion. To learn more, contact Tim Pickering.



## What Moves Us

Wednesdays at 7pm on Zoom

Continuing this month: *What Moves Us* is a course in both Unitarian Universalist history and theology, exploring the voices and spiritual experiences of historical and contemporary UU theologians, and how their experiences resonate within our own lives and theological understandings. [Sign up here](#)





# 'Round the Grounds...

By Susan Baker

Trumpets are blaring and drums are rolling! Denise and I are celebrating the 21 hardy volunteers who made the recent grounds spring workday a big success. Mulch got spread, wood chips got tossed, leaves got raked, and firewood got stacked.



If you missed out on the spring workday, plan on helping with the late October “put-it-to-bed” workday. We especially need young people to help the elder workers. Grounds workdays are a time for socializing, laughter, and pride in getting the job done.

“Pop-up” volunteers have made possible two recent renovations. Judy Furr did an excellent job painting two donated rocking chairs. The chairs now look new and are ready to be used for contemplation and viewing the crescent garden area. Thank you, Judy!



# 'Round the Grounds (cont.)

We asked Crosby Houston, an expert painter, to paint benches. He thought there were two benches, but there were eight! Nevertheless, he put in hours and hours assisting Denise in scraping off peeling paint, sanding surfaces, then finally doing the painting. The eight benches have a home in the upper lawn, around the fire circle. George Lally made the benches pre-COVID. Thank you, Crosby, Denise, and George, for your work. A thank you also goes to Dick Luke and Lucas Machi for loaning their power sanders.



## IT'S AN HONOR!!

The UUC grounds have been selected to be listed as a “point of interest” on the July 8 *New River Valley Garden Tour*. Although the UUC grounds are not one of the featured gardens, we can expect visitors. Our grounds were featured on the garden tour four years ago.

**NEEDED:** Adult watering volunteers to do the weekly watering of the potted plants by the crescent garden. The watering is done with a hose – no hauling of water in buckets. We need someone to water on Mondays and someone to water on Thursdays or Fridays. The task takes 30-35 minutes, and the watering starts in May and ends in September/October. If the watering volunteers need time off for travel or whatever reason, we will provide a temporary substitute. Email [Susan Baker](mailto:Susan.Baker@uuc.org) to let her know you will help with the watering.



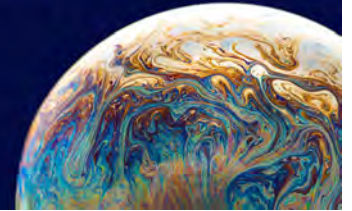
“Heaven is in the Dirt” – one of my favorite thoughts, compliments of Kimberly Homer.

**Unitarian Universalist Congregation**  
**Sunday Services**  
**May 2023**

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

Welcome to the Path of  
**Creativity**

**May 7: Celebrating Our Youth— Rev. Pam, Worship Associate, Victoria Taylor, members of the Coming of Age and YRUU (Young Religious Unitarian Universalists).** The youth will lead us in worship, as they share their experience of Unitarian Universalism. The Coming of Age youth will be invited to join the high school youth group, and the seniors will bridge into the UU Young Adults. Brian Peters will be our guest musician.



**May 14: Nurturing Creativity— Rev. Pam, Ministerial Intern, Anna Tulou, and Worship Associate, Cynthia Baute.** We'll consider how we might cultivate and nourish creativity, our theme of the month. As part of our exploration, we'll hold a Child Dedication ceremony for the youngest members of our community. (Contact [Rev. Pam](#) if you'd like your child dedicated.)

**May 21: Celebrating ALL our Beauty— Rev. Pam, Ministerial Intern, Anna Tulou, and Worship Associate, Margo Walter.** All are invited to bring a flower to our annual Flower Celebration – creating a beautiful representation of our community – as we explore how we might create a world free of stigma for those living with mental illness. Stay after to celebrate the volunteers who teach our children and youth with a Sundae Sunday!

**May 28: Communal Creativity— Rev. Pam and Worship Associate, Denise Martin.** In this multigenerational service, we will explore how we might develop and express our creativity together as a congregation.

**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.

We will practice generosity and radical hospitality.  
We will be known as a place of beauty, welcome, joy, and celebration.