



Unitarian Universalist Congregation

# Newsletter

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## Winter 2023-2024



Welcome Winter!

It was 17 degrees this morning when I woke up, which tells me that no matter what the calendar or sky says, it is winter. The nights are longer, the days are shorter, and the weather is colder. Winter is not my favorite season – I favor the new growth of spring and the spectacular colors of autumn – but I’ve come to value winter in ways I never did when I was younger.

Winter can be a time of rest and reflection, coming in from the cold and curling up with a hot mug and a warm blanket. I used to call winter my “Persephone phase” – after the Greek goddess who spent winter down in the underworld – because I became a bit of a hermit during the winter. But especially as the holiday season approaches, with so many opportunities for socializing and service, we can also get pulled into a whirl of activity. The darkness is punctuated with colorful lights and decorations and the stillness with familiar holiday tunes.

As I anticipate the months ahead, I’m mindful that we can choose which side of winter we most want and need in our lives – coziness and calm or fun and frolicking.

As always, you can find much of what you need and want here at UUC. On the fun and frolic side, we’ll kick off December with a Holiday Fun Night on Saturday, December 2nd – with cocoa, cookies, crafts, and Christmas classics. We’ll celebrate the return of an annual Holiday Concert put together by our fabulous pianist, Jared Gibbs, on Saturday, December 16<sup>th</sup>. And we can all get involved in this year’s multigenerational, no-rehearsal play on Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup> – this year with an interactive retelling of the nativity story. These are in addition to our many Food & Fellowship and Lifestage groups that meet weekly or monthly.

On the cozy and calm side, we’ll have Sunday services exploring the Gift of Mystery in our lives, including the day-to-day moments of wonder and those special holy times. With Christmas Eve on a Sunday this year, we’ll dedicate the morning service to the mysteries of the Solstice and the evening service to Christmas. We’ll also have our usual meditation and conversation groups.

Check out the [online calendar](#) and the [Opportunities to Serve and Connect](#) to find times and places to gather with other members of the UUC community for fun and frolic AND coziness and calm. Be mindful that some activities might not happen the week between Christmas and New Years.

I am especially aware of the importance of making intentional choices about what we need and want in our lives given my recent (and first!) bout of COVID. My usual inclination to power through and do all the things, even when I’m not feeling 100%, was no match for my COVID symptoms and the realization that I needed rest and isolation to get myself well and to keep from spreading the virus. I’m grateful that I had the ability to stay home, watch Netflix, and call on others for help, to do the things that I couldn’t do. I was sad to miss out celebrating Thanksgiving with friends but grateful for the turkey soup dropped off on my doorstep. I come away from COVID with a reminder that I shouldn’t have to be sick to get the rest I need, to ask for the help I need, and to accept others’ generosity. So my invitation to us all is to be intentional in the months ahead, assessing our own needs and our ability to help others, giving ourselves the gifts of quiet AND celebration.

Welcome winter! May we accept all its gifts,

Rev. Pam

## Contact Information

**Minister** Rev. Pam Philips  
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**Pianist:**  
Jared Gibbs  
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**Choir Director:**  
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LPCM@uucnr.org

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**UUC Office Phone:**  
540-552-9716

## 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)

## Message From Stewardship

### Stewardship Basics

The annual UUCNRV stewardship campaign, which begins in March, is right around the corner, so what better time to go over the basics of stewardship?

One of the comments stewards often hear is, "I contribute to the basket, so why do I need to pledge?" Just as your personal household monthly budget cannot be left to the whims of occasional donations, the budget of the UUC cannot be met by the money placed in the basket each week. We all know the many benefits we receive from our UUC community -- religious education for our children and adults, a supportive spiritual community, beautiful music, fun community events, opportunities to participate in social justice programs and community outreach – to name a few. These programs are supported by the time and energy of our many, many volunteers, but also by significant individual financial commitments, which we accept as our responsibility when we become a member of the UUC.

Last year's goal to support all of the workings of our congregation was \$376,000. The largest proportion of the budget is devoted to paying the mortgage and the salaries of our paid employees. In order to support new initiatives, we often need to increase the goal. Past initiatives have helped to support a ministerial intern position, energy-efficient improvements to our building, and newly created action teams and groups, such as the UU Young Adults.

Although the Finance Committee has not yet determined the goal for 2024-25, we can expect it to be at least as high as it was last year. We can easily divide the total budget by the number of congregants to figure out how much each person or "pledge unit" would need to contribute to meet the budget, but we know that not everyone has the same level of financial resources from which to draw. In the end, the amount you contribute is not as important as the fact that you make a regular contribution that can be counted on to pay the bills. What we can afford to include in the budget will be determined by the pledges everyone makes.

Each year the Stewardship Committee decides on a theme for the campaign and how the campaign will be run. Some of the details are yet to be decided, but this year the committee has decided to do away with the "Early Bird Campaign", which was typically done in February for those who wished to pledge early. This year's campaign will run through the month of March and will include a Kickoff Stewardship Brunch where everyone will have a chance to contribute feedback about their experience at the UUC, learn more about stewardship, and submit a pledge. I encourage you to think about what you value about the UUC and what you would be willing to pledge for 2024 over the next few months. Let's continue to support our beloved UUC congregation!

Mary Ann Hansen,  
Stewardship Committee Chair





# Events & Community News



## Fall 1/2-Plate Donations

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

- September 3:** Beans & Rice, \$233.42
- September 10:** UU Church of Jackson / UU Congregation of Tupelo, \$351.86
- September 17:** WVTF, \$565.91
- September 24:** LEAP, \$227.92
- October 1:** He/She/We/Ze, \$302.29
- October 8:** New River Abortion Access Fund, \$220.39
- October 15:** League of Women Voters, \$214.40
- October 22:** Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation, \$265.76
- October 29:** Scary to be Hungry -BIFP, \$239.42
- November 5:** Springhouse School, \$200.86
- November 12:** Christmas Store, \$282.80
- November 19:** Sequoia Housing Partnership, \$281.05
- November 26:** Monacan Nation \$215.18

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

## Second Sunday Potlucks

Everyone is invited to stay and enjoy a potluck after the service on Second Sundays. 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. If you're interested in helping with potlucks, please contact [Franklyn](#) for additional



## Sign Up to Provide Sunday Morning Snacks through June 2024

Each Sunday, except for Second Sunday Potlucks, we are providing snacks during coffee hour donated by our many groups, committees, and families. This has been so successful that we want to keep it going, so please sign up to provide snacks through June 2024 via this [link](#). Snack suggestions include 2-3 dozen cookies or brownies, a banana cake, a plate of cheese and crackers, or a plate of fruit. Thank you!

## 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, **December 3**, we will welcome new members into the congregation during the service. Contact [Rev. Pam](#) to be included in the ceremony.



## Events & Community News



### To Our House: Guests at UUC

Our congregation will again be participating in the TO OUR HOUSE program during the week of January 6th through 13th. TOH is the local homeless shelter program for single men and women, open only during the winter months. It provides a place to sleep, a warm dinner, breakfast, and a bag lunch.

This year the UUC will serve in the role of both a “host” church and a “support” church. Our TOH guests will be using Elarth Hall, kitchen, and library from around 5:30 pm each evening to around 6:30 am the following morning. To make their visit a success, volunteers are needed to serve as hosts, van drivers, clean-uppers, laundry-doers, and other roles as well as providing wholesome main dishes, sides, salads and desserts.

Please stop by our table in Elarth after any December service and discuss how you might contribute your time and/or talents.

### THE UUC HOLIDAY CONCERT

We will once again have a musical holiday celebration this year.

WHEN? Saturday, **December 16, at 7:00 PM**

WHERE? Here at UUC! The concert is free, but we will be collecting donations for Sequoia Housing Partnership. Come enjoy the music, share in refreshments and fellowship, and support a good cause!

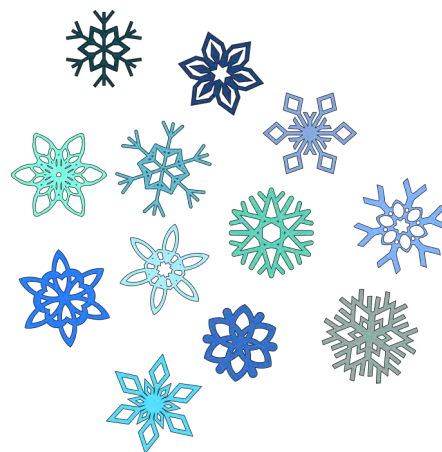
If you are interested and available to provide food for the concert, please contact [Polly Stimson](#).

### Anti-Racism

The Anti-Racism Group will meet again on **December 10** 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. We meet on Zoom from 1:00 to 2:00 pm. Join [here](#).

On December 10, we will discuss two brief chapters: Chapter 15, on the topic of Healthcare, and Chapter 16, on the topic of Traffic. Given the holiday schedule, we are meeting only once in December, and we finish up discussion of the book in January.

Reading the chapters in the 1619 Project by award-winning authors has shed new light on our nation's history about racial oppression, resistance, and strength in ways that none of us learned in our own educational experiences. It has also helped us to show up for local and national dialogues and activism regarding race and caste in more informed ways. Our conversations are co-facilitated by Katherine Allen and Annette Burr. All are welcome to attend! We hope you can join us on December 10 (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

Social Justice is alive and well at UUC through the activities of our 4 social justice teams: Anti-Racism, Environmental Justice/Climate Change, Reproductive Justice and Voting Rights. If you are interested in any of these social justice areas, we invite you to join us. We welcome your ideas, suggestions, energy, and involvement as we learn and act together.

**Reproductive Justice** – Since this team formed in Jan. 2023, we have been educating ourselves about reproductive justice issues which cover the gamut. We follow the Sister Song definition of reproductive justice which is "the human right to maintain personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities."

In 2024 we will continue to track relevant legislation in the VA General Assembly and support bills favorable to reproductive freedom. Two bills, one in the House and one in the Senate, which have already been filed, will start the process of amending the VA constitution to ensure the right to reproductive freedom. Passage of these bills could potentially put reproductive freedom on the ballot in Virginia in 2026. Also, in 2024 our UUC team will be focusing on maternal and infant health. We will be tracking and supporting legislation that promotes improved maternal and infant health and will be working with local and state partners in this effort.

We welcome you to join us whether it's for a one-time activity or ongoing involvement. We meet via zoom. Contact [Sara](#) for more information.

**Voting Rights** - The Voting Rights Team was formed in Jan. 2023. Most of our energy in 2023 was directed toward providing voter information/education to our congregation and to the community specifically focusing on the 2023 General Assembly election and local elections.

In 2024 we will track legislation in the VA General Assembly and support legislation favorable to voting rights. One such piece of legislation is a bill, already filed for both the Senate and House, for a constitutional amendment that will guarantee automatic restoration of voting rights to individuals who have completed their sentences for felonies. According to the ACLU, Virginia is one of only two states that ban a person convicted of a felony from voting for the rest of their life unless granted a pardon by the governor. A proposed amendment to the VA constitution must pass the legislature two years in a row with an election in between which means it would be 2026 before this issue could go on the ballot for voters as a referendum.

If you sometimes think your vote doesn't matter, look at some of the recent local and state election results for our area and you will see how very important every vote is! Unfortunately, attempts at voter suppression/restriction are continuing throughout the US in many state legislatures as well as via some court rulings. The right to vote is the cornerstone of our democracy. And, as we all know, 2024 is a presidential election year.

If voting rights are important for you, we encourage you to join us and UUs all across the country in taking action to support voting rights. Our meetings are via zoom and all are welcome. Contact [Sara](#) for 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.  
We will practice generosity and radical hospitality.  
We will be known as a place of beauty, welcome, joy, and celebration.



## 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 &amp; 4th Tuesday 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. Contact <a href="#">Rev. Pam</a> for more info.</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 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 and 3rd Monday 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 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 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@uucnr.org](mailto:uuya@uucnr.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 [Ella Kromin](#) 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

## Religious Education (RE) Teachers Wanted!

### No Experience Necessary!

We need YOU to help make our programming successful! Now recruiting teachers for Spring of 2024.

As an RE teacher, you are part of a 4 person teaching team, and commit to teaching/assisting about 8 classes over the course of the semester. All lessons and preparation are done for you. This is a great way to learn and have fun alongside our children and youth.

This year, our preschoolers are learning about our congregation and what it means to be Unitarian Universalists with the curriculum *Chalice Children*. Our older youth are learning about different world religions, with *Picture Book World Religions* (K-1,) *Books and Cooks* (Gr. 2-3,) *Holidays and Holy Days* (Gr.4-5) and *Building Bridges*—(Gr. 6-8)

To volunteer, contact [Rachel](#). Thank You!



## YRUU Coffee House

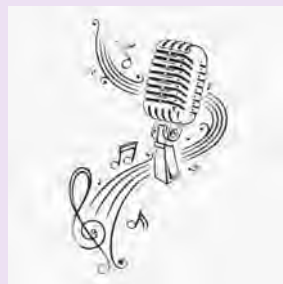
Saturday, January 20, 6:00 pm

Hello Everyone!

The Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU) will be hosting a Coffee House on Saturday, January 20th, 2024. We will be supplying hot beverages and baked goods, as well as hosting an awesome open mic starting at 6pm. Come share your cool talents or simply come enjoy the show, and help us fundraise for our future trips!

[Sign up here](#)

To perform and/or  
donate food and  
beverages



Thank you for your support,

YRUU

## Middle School Youth Group

MSYG meets once a month on a Friday night for youth in grades 6-8. Upcoming meetings:

**December 1**—MSYG @ Holiday Parade. *Walk in the parade with the UUC. Then meet at church for hot chocolate and a bonfire.*

**January 19**—NRV Superbowl. *Bowling and laser-tag with friends.*

**February 16**—Project Linus. *Make no-sew blankets for hospitalized children in this fun service project.*

## December Social Action Project—Reverse Advent Calendar

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



## Holiday Pageant and Buddy Reveal



December 17



*You won't want to miss the UUC's No-Rehearsal Holiday Pageant. 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.*

## Holiday Party & Family Movie Night

Saturday, December 2, 6-9pm

Come to UUC on December 2nd to celebrate the holidays with hot chocolate and cookies. There will be stations set up to create holiday ornaments.

In the sanctuary, holiday classics will be playing:

- The Grinch Who Stole Christmas
- Charlie Brown's Christmas
- Frosty the Snowman
- Rudolph the Red-Nose Reindeer."

**Fun for all ages!**





# Adult Religious Education Programs

**OWL for Older Adults (50+)**—Using values, communication skills and spirituality as starting points, this program explores sexuality issues for older adults. Adult OWL builds an understanding of healthy sexual relationships, affirms diversity and helps participants accept and affirm their own sexuality throughout their lives. OWL for older adults starts in January. [Sign up here for more information.](#)



## Building Bridges for Adults

This class will continue to explore world religions. Classes are offered throughout the year to align with our middle school program, which includes offsite visits to different houses of worship. Classes are held at UUC from 6:30-8pm on select Mondays. Attend all the classes, or just a few.

**This Winter:** *Pagan and Indigenous Religions—December 11*  
*Islam—January 15 and 28*  
*Christianity—February 19 and March 4*



[Register Here](#)

*Do you ever feel like you're missing out on something?*

Sign up for ***This Week in LFD***—the newsletter for all our Religious Education Programming.

*Every Monday, get the news of all the events happening in Adult and Children's Religious Education, as well as special events.*

*Not on the mailing list? [Click here to sign up.](#)*



## Getting Your Ducks in a Row

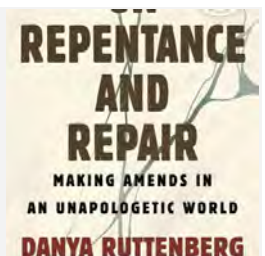
Join Cynthia and Gretchen Luke for a 2 session class on important steps to take to prepare for end of life—including wills, advance directives, power of attorney, and funeral/memorial instructions. This class will follow Isabel Berney's advice and that of the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Blue Ridge. Particularly of interest to older adults (50+). Meets Saturdays, January 20 and February 3, from 9-11am. [Register here.](#)



**UUA Common Read Discussion Group: *On Repentance and Repair: Making Amends in an Unapologetic World*** by Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg (Beacon Press, 2022).

*On Repentance and Repair* invites readers of any faith to explore practices for accountability that can bring us into wholeness and really make a difference in our personal, community, and national relationships. Discussion group will meet March, 2024. [Sign up here](#) to get notifications about this class.

Learn more about the UUA Common Read at <https://www.uua.org/read>.



**Parent Covenant Group**—Meets second Saturdays from 5:00-7:00 p.m.

Join other parents for a potluck followed by guided discussion. Discussion topics are loosely based on the *Soul Matters* theme, but with emphasis on topics relevant to parents. Childcare provided, with requested donation of \$5-10 per family. [Please register your family here.](#)

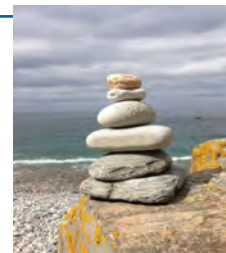
# On-Going Adult Programs

**Anti-Racism Discussion Groups**—Meets the second and fourth Sunday 1:00-2:00 p.m.

Topics are announced via email. Email [dlfd@uucnrv.org](mailto: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.

Bring your lunch and join the conversation, as we discuss a book that deepens our spiritual journey. All are welcome, even if you have not read the chapters being discussed. Group members share their insights and personal experiences and all thoughts and opinions are welcome. Meets Wednesdays at noon, in person or on zoom. To learn more, contact Tim Pickering. [Zoom Link](#)

**Sunday Circle**—Meets 1st and 3rd Sundays, 8:30 or 11:30 AM, in Library and on [Zoom](#)

**December 3 : Costa Rica Travelogue**

Carol and Jim Kern: We had the good fortune to take a trip to Costa Rica to celebrate our 28th anniversary and Jim's 60th birthday. We stayed in the town of Cahuita, on the Caribbean Coast, near the border of Panama. We had many wonderful encounters with people, places, and wildlife. Now we want to share some of our experiences with you. Join us to hear about our trip, the things we saw, the people we met, and the lessons we learned. 8:30-9:30 AM

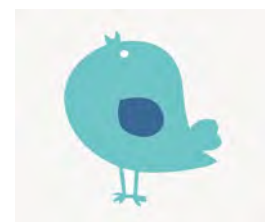
**December 17: Sustainable Blacksburg**

Carol Davis will discuss sustainability projects in Blacksburg. 11:30 AM-12:30 PM



**January 7: Blue Birds**

Carl Hansen has monitored hundreds of bluebird boxes in the New River Valley over the past 15+ years. He has summarized his data on the bluebirds, house wrens, and tree swallows that inhabited them over the last year and will present it along with stories of his experiences and lessons learned. 8:30-9:30 AM



**January 21: Topic and Presenter TBD**

11:30 AM-12:30 PM

**February 4: Geo-Iconography: Maps in Political Cartoons**

Ed Sewell will discuss the use of maps or geographic images in political cartoons. He'll use some historical cartoons as well as very recent cartoons that use the same image. 8:30-9:30 AM

**February 18: Topic and Presenter TBD**

11:30 AM-12:30 PM

Have a topic you'd like to share? Contact [Rachel](#) or [Jamie](#) to schedule your Sunday Circle.

## Ministry Discernment Update: Gratitude and Next Steps

Around 40 people showed up to participate in the listening circles in October, and a cornucopia of ideas were shared to help us as we begin our journey of discerning an outward-facing ministry the UUC might undertake in the future. The Ministry Discernment Team (MD team: Niko Rensberger, Lucas Machi, Ally DeHoff, Jim Kern, and Alex Parkhurst) has since been hard at work, reviewing all the input and data that were shared, not to mention so many one-on-one conversations, email exchanges, etc.

In addition to all the ideas (thank you thank you thank you!), we asked participants to name their fears and concerns about taking on such a ministry, as well as what they perceive to be the UUC's gifts and sources of abundance, and we were amazed by the wisdom and celebration that arose out of this sharing. Among the concerns, an oft-repeated question was whether we have the capacity to take on this kind of ministry as a congregation, and also people had concerns about inadvertently doing harm, or not being able to follow through, or sustainability. At the same time, participants expressed so much love for our faith tradition, a desire to live and promote our values within the larger community, and a great appreciation for our buildings and grounds and, most especially, for our connections to one another.

Lucas Machi has created a [network visualization](#) with the data - you can interact with it to better understand the complex connections within all the ideas shared - and we also have a video summarizing the data, both linked from the [MD team Web page](#) (in the Members Area of the UUC Web site). For those wanting a quick overview, check out the Listening Circle Results Summary PDF. Please take some time to explore and look through all that was shared, and then we will be asking for everyone to participate in a short [questionnaire](#) to help us discover: *of the ideas shared*, which topics/areas speak most to you? Where do you have connections in these communities/areas? Answering these questions does not mean committing yourself to anything (although if you want to be involved in the process, do let us know!) so we encourage you to take the time to review the data and offer your input *by December 10*.

After December 10, the MD team will review all the feedback received from the questionnaire, and we will pick two or three areas to explore. We will begin contacting people in the identified communities/areas, and start the work of building relationships and learning what might be needed or wanted. From this, we will develop ideas for two or three possible ministries to present to the congregation, who will then have the opportunity to discuss and to decide: 1) whether the UUC wants to take on a collective, outward-facing ministry at this time, and if yes, 2) which proposed idea would they like to pursue.

## Around the Grounds

Photos By Cassy Davis

Annual "Put the Grounds to Bed" was a success thanks to all our UUC and VT volunteers!



**Unitarian Universalist Congregation**  
**Sunday Services**  
**Winter 2023-2024**

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

**December 3: Transcending Mystery - Rev. Pam and Worship Associate, Victoria Taylor.** What is the role of mystery in our lives? How does our experience of mystery and wonder inspire us to seek truth and meaning?

**December 10: Question as Sacrament - Ministerial Intern, Anna Tulou and Worship Associate, Denise Martin.** Robert Weston advised us: "Cherish your doubts, for doubt is the attendant to truth." This Sunday we will explore the roles doubt and curiosity play in our tradition, as well as our willingness (or resistance) to admit – and celebrate – that we don't have all the answers.

**December 17: Annual Multigenerational No-Rehearsal Play- Rev. Pam and Director of Lifespan Development, Rachel Craine and the WHOLE Congregation.** Join us for our annual no-rehearsal play, this year an interactive retelling of the Nativity Story that will help us all see it from a new and delightful perspective.

**December 24: Mysteries of Dark and Light - Rev. Pam and Worship Associate, Earle Irwin.** We'll explore our relationships with darkness and light as we celebrate the winter solstice.

**December 24 (5:00 pm): Christmas Eve Service -** Join us for a service full of stories and song that will help us explore the mysteries of this most holy night.

**December 31: Seeds for the New Year - Rev. Dr. Sofía Betancourt, Rev. Pam, and Worship Associate, Cynthia Baute.** What seeds are you planting for the new year? How are you weaving your magic into your relationships with others? How can we center beauty and goodness and love in all that's ahead? Join us for a special service with a message from UUA President Rev. Dr. Sofía Betancourt.

**January: "Love is the doctrine of this church. The quest for truth is its sacrament. And service is its prayer."** - Thus begins a well-loved covenant used by many Unitarian Universalist congregations. Yet many have questioned the proposed wording of the revision to Article II of the UUA Bylaws, which puts Love at the center of our shared values. Throughout the month of January, we'll explore what we might mean by Love, more specifically, Liberating Love, and how putting it at the center of our faith might affect how we live in the world.

**February: Justice and Equity-** This month we'll explore two more core values to Unitarian Universalists that seem closely aligned but call us to not only acknowledge every person's "right to flourish with inherent dignity and worthiness" but also to "work to be diverse multicultural Beloved Communities where all thrive." If these are indeed core values of Unitarian Universalism, what might we do? Are we up to the task?