



Unitarian
Universalist
Congregation

UUC

inspire • create • transform

SUMMER 2025 NEWSLETTER

Message from our Minister

As we enter summer, I'm mindful of our June worship theme – **Living Love through the Practice of Freedom** – and wondering how it best fits with the season ahead. The practice of freedom lately has seemed to require quite a bit of work – writing letters, making phone calls, participating in protests and vigils. I don't want to suggest that any of us should stop all our efforts to preserve civil liberties – our own and others'. But I recognize that when we work all the time at something, it can be exhausting – physically and emotionally. So as I look to the months stretching ahead of us, my mind turns to the possibility of practicing being **carefree**. Do you remember what it was like in childhood? After the last day of

school, we anticipated a time free from the daily grind and routine, the assignments and tests. Instead, summer vacation stretched out with the promise of time and space to have fun and to simply be.



*Rev. Pam
Philips*

Most of us cannot return to the days of totally carefree summers. In fact, childhood summers may not have been totally carefree. In our house, we had daily and weekly chores like mowing the lawn or washing the dishes. But still . . . with longer days and fewer responsibilities, we could find time for fun and adventure.

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Message from the Minister *continued from previous page*

That's the invitation I'd like to extend to us all – to find the time and space for fun and adventure, but also for simply being. Sit on the porch to watch the birds, lie in the grass and watch the clouds, float in a pool or a lake and let the water take away all your burdens. **Be carefree.**

The pace of life in the summer slows down for most of us, including here at UUC. Much of the work for the congregational year will be completed after the Annual Meeting, where we extend our gratitude to outgoing board members and welcome new ones who will take up the work in earnest in the fall. We will have passed the annual budget, thanks to the hard work of our board, finance and stewardship committees, and the generosity of our congregation. Some hard-working committees will take a break over the summer. Our Sunday services will be shorter and the children's RE classes will be more relaxed. Staff will take well-deserved vacation time. We'll have guest musicians playing while Jared enjoys two months of summer with his family, and guest speakers and worship associates will fill the pulpit while I'm on vacation and study leave.

But many of our activities continue, and if you have the time and space in your life, you might consider trying something new. The RE program can still use some volunteers to spend with our littlest community members on Sunday morning. Why not give it a try? The ongoing social gatherings and adult faith development opportunities (see the calendar for times and places) continue throughout the summer. Why not join a new-to-you group? We'll have some special multigenerational gatherings after services (see the LFD page). And summer is an especially good time to get engaged with the grounds ministry – watering or mowing or weeding.

Whatever you choose to do this summer, I wish for you the gift of **being carefree**, for as much time as possible. The work will always be there, but we can enter into it more fully and effectively if we lay down our burdens and give ourselves time for rest, relaxation, and rejuvenation.

With all my care,

Rev. Pam

Remember to collect some water this summer to bring to our ingathering worship on August 24!



Year of Action, Appreciation, and Engagement

Thank you to all who serve, lead, and show up with open hearts. Our mission to Inspire, Create, and Transform is alive in your fellowship. It has been an immense joy to serve as your 2024-2025 Board President.

We hope our congregation feels the thanks and care behind every Board decision. And if you haven't heard it yet, let me take a moment now to personally thank you and share some of our 2024-2025 accomplishments.

This year, the Board worked to strengthen our community from the inside out. We ensured all staff roles were filled and took steps to appreciate our volunteers, especially during our minister's sabbatical.

Our congregation showed remarkable courage and participation in the UU the Vote and Defending Democracy initiatives. These values remain at the heart of our community.

We are a welcoming congregation. So, this year, the Board focused on improving accessibility and safety by conducting an assessment, improving facilities, and finding more ways to increase accessibility during UUC activities. Several things were identified. Future projects are being prioritized based on budget, safety, accessibility, and volunteers.



by
Laura Robinson
Board President
2024-2025

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Message from the Board *continued from previous page*

The Board also had a goal to encourage engagement within our congregation. By doing this, we hoped to nurture a strong sense of belonging and ownership, which may also lead to growth in membership and financial support. We were so happy to see many of you at our activities fair and joining committees.



You matter. The Board is so grateful you're here, and our congregation is better because you're part of it.



We would like to recognize our congregation's work in our communities. Our partnership with the To Our House Shelter makes a real difference, offering winter shelter to the homeless. Also, it was a joy to be able to help families impacted by Hurricane Helene and celebrate the opening of the Calfee Community & Cultural Center.

Finally, we are especially thankful to our Finance Committee. Their guidance has been so valuable to the Board, and their hard work is often unseen. It is our mutual goal to move away from a deficit budget and ensure a sustainable financial future.

And if no one's told you today: you matter. We're so grateful you're here, and our congregation is better because you're part of it.

*-Laura Robinson,
UUC Board President*

*Pictured:
Cassy Kost,
President Elect
for 2025-2026,
and Laura Robinson*



June Worship Theme: **Living Love through The Practice of Freedom**



6/1—The Freedom to Flower – *Rev. Pam, Cynthia Baute, & Victoria Taylor*

As we begin our month-long exploration of living love through the practice of freedom, we celebrate one of our beloved Unitarian Universalist rituals – the flower service – in this multigenerational service. Each person brings a flower to help create our congregational bouquet. We also recognize the recipient of this year's Isabel Berney award for Exceptional Service.

6/8 – Freedom to Be Our Authentic Selves – *Rev. Pam & Denise Martin*

We'll help kick off Blacksburg's Community Pride Week with a service celebrating the LGBTQ+ community's contributions to our world and recommitting to ensure that everyone is free to be who they are without fear. Stay after the service for our Second Sunday Potluck and consider bringing a rainbow-themed dish to add to the festivities.

6/15 – How to be Free – *Rev. Pam and Rev. Jamie McReynolds*

What does it mean to be truly free? Is freedom just another word for nothing left to lose? We'll also celebrate this Father's Day service with a "Child Dedication" ceremony. Please contact Rev. Pam if you would like your child(ren) to be dedicated by the congregation. [Read more about this ritual.](#)



6/22 — Freedom from Suffering – *Jennifer Springsteen & Britton Gildersleeve*

Buddhism's teachings hope to address the problem of suffering; Christianity tells us Christ suffered in our stead. Humans grapple with why suffering exists, how to be free of it, and how Divine love plays a role. Jennifer Springsteen is a hospital chaplain and writer in Leesburg, Virginia. She lives with her husband, Joe, and Sam the cat, and when lucky, they receive visitations from their daughter, Charlotte, a soon-to-be college junior.

6/29 – UUA General Assembly Sunday Worship – *Rev. Nicole Kirk, Rev. Pam & Ellen Plummer*

We'll share parts of the GA Sunday worship service – the UU version of mega-church – with a sermon preached by Meadville Lombard Theological School professor the Reverend Nicole Kirk.

Worship this Summer

In July and August, we'll enjoy a variety of service themes as we welcome new people into our pulpit, including many of our wonderful worship associates.

JULY

July 6 **Reimagining Patriotism, Rev. Pam & Denise Martin**

As our nation celebrates its birth and the Declaration of Independence, we'll explore what it means to be patriotic in a time when so much of our treasured democracy is under attack.

July 13 **Rev. Pam & Cynthia Baute**, with musical guest **Ash Devine**

July 20 **Rev. Lauren Levwood & Victoria Taylor**

July 27 **David Brown & Britton Gildersleeve**

AUGUST

Aug 3 **Victoria Taylor & Gretchen Luke**

Aug 10 **Britton Gildersleeve & Denise Martin** | highlighting poetry

Aug 17 **Rev. Pam & Cynthia Baute** | Backpack Blessing!

Aug 24 **Multigenerational Ingathering Water Service, Rev. Pam**

A beloved Unitarian Universalist tradition, we'll mark the beginning of the congregational year by bringing water to pour into a communal bowl to symbolize all that we bring to this community of faith. Remember to collect a small container of water this summer to bring back to UUC!

Aug 31 **Multigenerational Labor Day Weekend** | stay tuned for details

GATHER IN PERSON OR ONLINE EACH SUNDAY AT 10 AM

The Sunday service is at the center of our life as a Congregation. This is a sacred time for us as we gather to reflect on the values that we share, to rejoice in the goodness and beauty of life, and to consider the challenges that we face as individuals and as members of the global community.



Beginning July 1, here are our Board Members for the 2025-2026 year.



CHRIS LONG, PRESIDENT

Chris Long started attending UUC in late 2021 and has been a volunteer for almost the entire time he has been attending. He has found himself stepping into multiple leadership roles in his relatively short time here, most notably leading the Auction committee for two years. He loves supporting his loving UUC community by serving on the AV team and leading the Quarterlifers social group. Chris works as a senior account services representative at the National Bank of

Blacksburg. He has a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Virginia Tech and loves cheering on the Hokies alongside playing pickleball and spending time with friends. *Email Chris at president@uucnrv.org.*

CASSY KOST, PRESIDENT-ELECT

Cassy Kost and her two children have attended the UUC since spring 2018. She enjoys participating in UUC grounds work, attending spiritual based workshops and gatherings, as well as family events, and assists with UUC music. She works at Virginia Tech and believes in the importance of emphasizing inclusivity and UUC values in all spaces, while strengthening community. Additionally, she serves as a leader for local Girl Scouts. In her free time, Cassy enjoys spending time with her children and dogs, creating music, exploring the outdoors, reading, and many other artful hobbies.



Board Members 2025-2026

CAROLYN KOGAN, SECRETARY, joined the UUC in 2024 with her husband, Greg, and their two young children, Lucia and Matthias. Drawn to the congregation's commitment to respect, tolerance, and understanding within a multigenerational community, Carolyn quickly became involved in children's programming. She served as an RE instructor for the Pre-K and 2nd/3rd grade classes and has taken an active role in revitalizing the playground—working with the committee to replace outdated equipment and design interactive, inclusive spaces for children of all ages.



Professionally, Carolyn teaches in the Marketing Department at Virginia Tech, where she leads courses on social media, content marketing, and the intersection of personal well-being and professional success. With a background in media and production, she is attentive to detail—from ideation to execution. Needless to say, she's a fan of spreadsheets, to-do lists, and spending time with her family.

WAYNE NEU, TREASURER, has been a part of UUC since the early 1990s. His service started with performing many small tasks, and as he became more engaged and more attached to UUC, he served in a number of other capacities. He's sung in the choir and operated the sound/recording equipment. He served as auctioneer for many of our auctions. He's served on the Finance, Long-Range Planning, and Stewardship committees and was a part of the task force that raised funds for our building expansion. Wayne served twice on the Board as a member-at-large and again as President-Elect and then as President.



Board Members 2025-2026



JOSEPH COOLEY, MEMBER AT LARGE, is an accomplished architect currently working at Virginia Tech. With a profound expertise in accessible architecture, Joseph brings over 30 years of experience as a Unitarian Universalist, including three years of active involvement with our congregation. Joseph is a member of the UUC Safety Committee and is working towards ensuring the safety and well-being of our community. Originally from Western New York, Joseph has two grown children and is married to Robin, also a member of UUC. Beyond his

professional achievements, he is passionate about various forms of art, such as drawing, painting, and glass art. His architectural background provides him with a unique blend of analytical skills and imaginative vision, which will be invaluable in his role on the board.

HELEN RENQUIST, MEMBER AT LARGE, grew up in Giles County (Newport), Virginia. She received her B.A. in Biology Education from Emory and Henry College. From 1972 to 1995, she lived in Finland and is fluent in Finnish. She moved back to Virginia with her family in 1995, after which she obtained her MS in Curriculum and Instruction in ESL (English as a Second Language) and taught ESL in Montgomery County for 14 years. Helen and her husband Åke-Eric (deceased 2023) joined the UUC in 2017. Since joining our congregation, Helen has volunteered for numerous activities and taken part in various groups. At present, she helps with religious education. She has two children and two grandchildren.



ANDY ROBERTS, MEMBER AT LARGE, and his wife, Mary Ann, started attending the UUC in the early 2000s. He has taught RE as well as middle-school and high school OWL, been a member of the Lay Pastoral Care Committee, and chaired the Stewardship Committee for several years. He most recently performed as The Fanged Steward in the 2024 and 2025 Pledge Drive video series. Andy is retired from Virginia Tech and likes to hike, bicycle, travel, read, putter in the yard, and cook for Mary Ann.

Lifespan Faith Development



Summer Religious Education

Summer RE begins June 8 with a special class creating art. We'll kick off the summer by making art for a children's art show at UUC! Thanks to Denise Martin for organizing!

Then, our regular summer curriculum begins. Our K-5 class will be using CARTUUNS: Unitarian Universalist Values through the animated short films of Pixar and Disney.

June 15—Lou

June 22—For the Birds

June 29—Piper

July 6—Bao

July 13—Paper Man



July 20—Red's Dream

July 27—Feast

August 3—Day and Night

August 10—Forky Asks a Question

August 17—Boundin'

Sunday Fundays: Our Summer Pre-K Program

Our preschoolers will enjoy a story, coloring, and outdoor play.

Volunteers needed! [Sign up here](#) to help out.



Coming Soon in Fall RE—Starts September 7

PreK-K—Chalice Children

Grades 1-3—World Blessings

Grades 4-5—Holidays and Holy Days

Grades 6+—Crossing Paths

Grades 8-9—Our Whole Lives: Sexuality Education

MSYG: Middle School Youth Group

YRUU—High School Youth Group



Our Whole Lives

[Interested in Teaching?](#)
[Email Rachel](#)

Still need to register?

[New Families Click Here](#)

[Returning Families Click Here](#)

Important Summer Dates

August 17—Backpack Blessing—Children Begin in Service.
Last Day of Summer RE

August 24—All-Ages Water Service.

August 24—RE Open House. Join us downstairs, after the service, to visit the RE classrooms and meet the teachers for the 2025-26 year.

August 31—No RE.



Adult RE Programs —Coming in 2025-2026

Transgender Inclusion in the Congregation—This 6-session workshop from the Transforming Hearts Collective focuses on helping our congregation to be fully inclusive, and affirming of, the full breadth of gender diversity. Gain the context and skills to help us transform into a fully welcoming congregation. Dates and times TBD.

Date with Death Club—Join us for a practical exploration of mortality in community, with a balance of humor and earnest regard for the topic of mortality. Dates and times TBD. Topics include:

- *Hospice, Palliative Care, & End-of-Life Documents, Oh My!*
- *Medical Aid in Dying / Death with Dignity*
- *Owning Your Dying*
- *Planning Your Own Memorial Service*
- *What to Do with a Dead Body?*
- *Writing Your Own Obituary*



And More!— Rev. Pam plans to offer a class on sermon writing as well as one on developing your own theology. Also look for sessions on spiritual practices. Watch for a more complete list of programs and sign up links in the fall newsletter.

On-Going Adult Programs

Have an idea for a class you'd like to take (or lead?) email [Rachel](#).

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 PM

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.

Summer Fun For All Ages

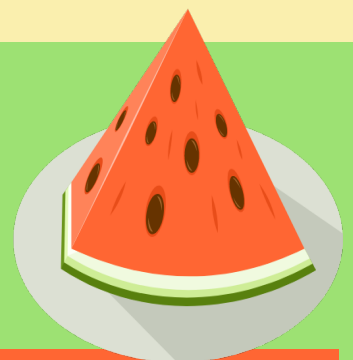
Sundays, June 29 and August 17

Want to get together with other families and UU friends of all ages this summer? Let's gather at the UUC for a picnic, water play and games. Bring your lunch. Save the dates! Watch email and Facebook for details.



All Ages Game Night—Saturday, July 19

Come to UUC for a night of fun and games. A light kid-friendly meal and snacks will be provided. Bring your friends! 5-8pm



UUC Library News

Summer is a great time to pick up a good book. Did you know the UUC has 2000+ books available to check out?

Our adult library books are categorized into groups, easily identified by label colors:

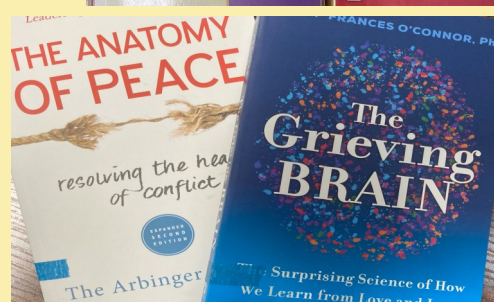
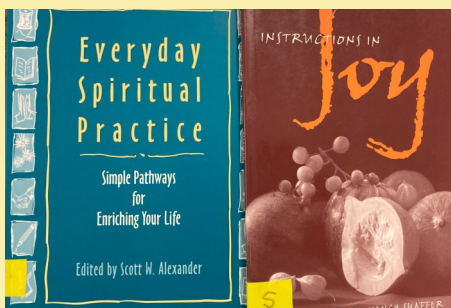
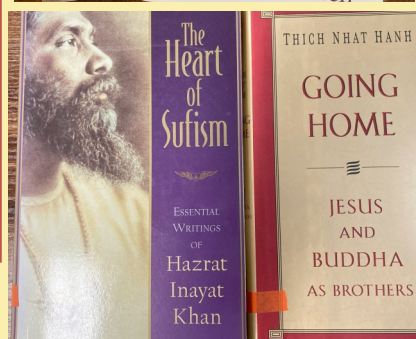
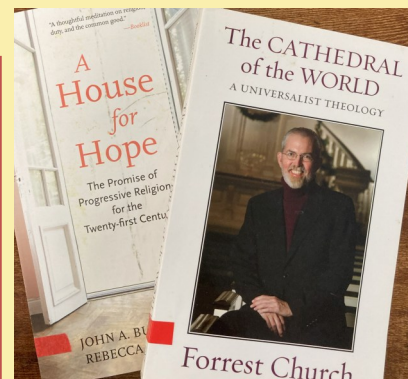
UU Identity—includes UU theology and history, congregational history, church governance and leadership.

Religious Teachings and History—Christianity (white label), Judaism, Islam, and other world religions and beliefs

Spirituality/Theology—Spirituality, concepts of God, ways to deepen and grow one's spirit

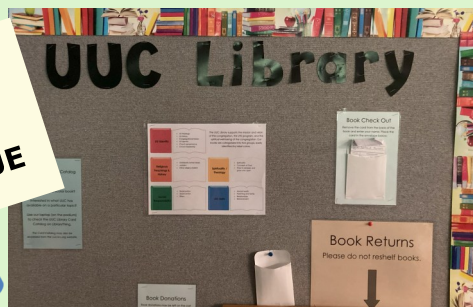
Social Responsibility—Social Justice, Social Action, Ethics

Life Skills—Mental health, Parenting and Family, Relationships, Recovery, Aging, Bereavement



Check-out instructions are on the bulletin board in the library:

Search the
**ONLINE
CATALOGUE**



And take a look at our awesome KIDS COLLECTION in the lower lobby!



Interested in serving on the Library Committee? Contact [Rachel](#) for more info.

Got Books? The YRUU Booksale is an annual event that helps our youth group fundraise for trips. Drop off your book donations to Rachel anytime this summer. Our sale will be **September 28 and October 5.**



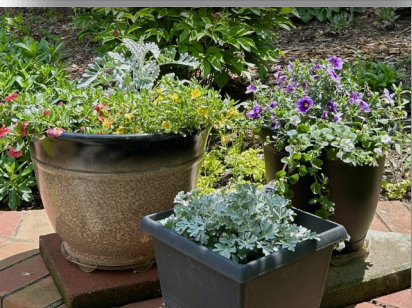
'ROUND THE GROUNDS

By Susan Baker

Springtime on the UUC grounds is magical – early flowers blooming and others emerging; bees looking for nectar; birds singing and cavorting, and a gorgeous palette of greens and pinks. The distinctive irises were donated by Don and Carolyn Rude. Don was a master iris collector and grower.



The potted flowers are thriving due to Mother Nature, TLC, fertilizer, and doses of water from our faithful “pot waterers” – Ellen Rummel, Jane Hundley, and Janette Parrish. Contact [Susan Baker](#) to be a substitute waterer to cover for “the regulars” when they vacation.



The street front entrance to UUC is looking spiffy due to the adopt-a-spot volunteers, Cindy Barden and Denise Martin. They work together to do the mowing and trimming. Crosby Houston refreshed the entrance sign with a fresh coat of solid stain; at 89 he still has a steady hand and a cheerful volunteer spirit. Part of the front entrance facelift is new signage that is coming soon. Others who have taken adopt-a-spots are Amanda Morgan (pond/bog area); and the Unitarian Universalist Young Adults, UUYAs, (the primary picnic area).

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'Round the Grounds continued



We still need “foster parents” for the **playground** (bi-weekly mowing); the **memorial garden** (trimming and keeping it neat); the **upper lawn** (oversight) and the **main lawn** (oversite). It takes a lot of people to tend the 6 acres of UUC grounds. We depend on the ground’s volunteers to work their magic April-October. Can you help? Contact [Susan Baker](#) to claim your spot.

Another way to help is to participate with grounds management is the monthly **informal workday** (first Saturday of the month). It’s 2 hours of your time that will be well spent. Contact [Amanda Morgan](#) for details.

Volunteers are always needed.
Consider helping keep our grounds a special place!

Come, stroll the UUC grounds

*for mental, emotion and
physical wellbeing! Bring a
meal, find one of the many
seats, and soak in the
sights, sounds, and smells.
We are a community of
caring people and the
grounds are part of the
“community.”*



Congrats to Barbara Taylor, recipient of the Isabel Berney Award!

The Isabel Berney Award for Excellence and Exceptional Service recognizes a member or friend of the Congregation who has meaningfully impacted our congregation. The recipient is nominated by members of our congregation and selected by the Board. This year, many deserving folks who have made extraordinary contributions in service to our community were nominated. In worship on June 1, we were delighted to present the award to the 2024-2025 recipient, Barbara Taylor.

Barbara has served and continues to serve in all sorts of ways to the benefit of UUC. She has served as Board President and Board Member. She participated in at least two search committees for settled ministers, which is one of the most important services that congregants provide and it is extremely time consuming.

She was one of the first OWL leaders and continued to teach that curriculum continuously since 2009. Inspired by a

sermon about anti-racism, she initiated

the Anti-Racism work here in our congregation by providing resources and group discussions on a regular basis.

Here is how one member described our nominee: "I believe that UUC would be a different place, and not nearly so open and welcoming, if Barbara Taylor was not a member. That is, I believe, the legacy that Isabel Berney left us with and what we are honoring." Join us in giving thanks for Barbara Taylor!



“

“Do your little bit of good where you are; it’s those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.”

– Desmond Tutu

”

Community Service Team Updates



NEW Project “Hope To Walk”

*Offering prosthetic legs and
hope to a world in need.*



By Molly McClintock

Local organization, “Hope to Walk” provides prosthetic legs to amputees in need. Volunteers are needed to help build parts and assemble kits for prostheses. Come help this Blacksburg nonprofit provide life-changing free services to amputees in Central America.

Do you know how to operate a bandsaw? A mitre saw? A drill press? A belt sander? Or a sewing machine? Can you follow packing instructions for kits?

We'll set up a volunteer rotation with flexible times and hours and training provided. Contact Molly McClintock at mollymcclintock235@gmail.com if interested.

OTHER COMMUNITY SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

We will also be offering Habitat for Humanity assistance on their new building project of 11 townhomes in Blacksburg. If you want to join a UUC crew, likely on a Saturday, please contact Molly.

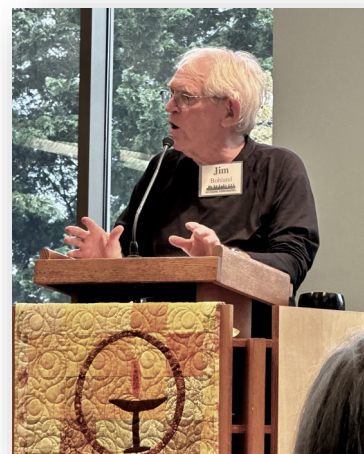
Our amazing Community Service Team continues to support To Our House, Interfaith Food Pantry, Adopt a Highway, Fairview Adult Home bingo, Montgomery County Christmas Store, Women's Resource Center cake delivery, and the Blacksburg Refugee Partnership.

DEFENDING DEMOCRACY



By Jim Bohland

The Defending Democracy (DD) initiative that the congregation approved in the spring of 2024 has been initially led by a steering committee consisting of: Jim Bohland, Mark Benson, Sara Dalton, Jamie McReynolds, and Bob Stimson. More recently Linda Greaver, Kathrine Allen, and Andrew Walker from UUC have been added to the group, along with Andy Morikawa and Danny Axson from the wider community.



The mission of Defending Democracy is to advocate for actions and policies that strengthen democracy within this country through education, mobilization, and outreach. Since our inception, DD has sponsored or co-sponsored seven major events that focused on such topics as faith and

democracy; rural/urban policy issues; misinformation; Project 2025; current threats to our democracy; and most recently, mobilizing for defending democracy, which you can see in these photos. Attendance has ranged from 120 to 250+ citizens.

We currently have a mailing list of over 400 people who have expressed interest in our work and wish to be involved. We are establishing our agenda for actions for the next nine months and welcome folks who are concerned about the current state of our democracy. Members with particular skills in social media are needed to help us broaden our message. To get involved, please contact **Jim Bohland**.



Save the Date

Kingian Nonviolence Workshop

*apply peaceful strategies for
solving personal and
community problems*

***Saturday, June 21,
1:00-5:30 PM***

*Unitarian Universalist
Congregation*

Stay tuned for more details!



Our Bodies Our Choice

*Reproductive
Justice in the NRV*

OBOC Organizers Group left to right: Shruti Naik, Anne Deaton, Andrea Langston, Susan Anderson, Jeri Rogers, Jane Goette, UUC's Sara Dalton, Marie Paget, Suchitra Samanta

This mission of Our Bodies Our Choice is to increase public awareness about reproductive justice issues and to mobilize in support of equitable access to reproductive services. They aim to mobilize community engagement through education about reproductive justice and equal rights. If you would like to get involved, please contact [Sara Dalton](#).

Voting Rights

*to promote and encourage
voting by members of our
congregation as well as
the larger community*



The primary election to select candidates for the November General Election will take place June 17 and early voting has already begun.

The Voter Guide by *Cardinal News* features a Q&A from all candidates so you can compare what they say. See the link on the right.

To see who is on your ballot use the BallotPedia link on the right.

- **Register, check your registration status, or apply for an absentee ballot**
- **Voter Guide**
- **ballotpedia.org**





NEW MEMBERS



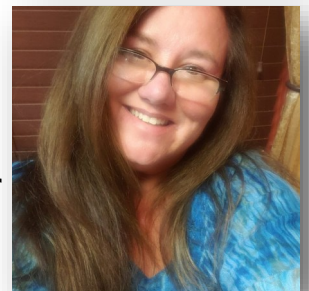
Erin Andrea moved to Blacksburg last August to start graduate school at Virginia Tech where she studies queer relationships. Moving to Virginia from Illinois she was a long way from home and adopted two cats, Walter and Otto, who are the great joys of her life. She still felt something was missing and found herself at UUC looking for a congregation that aligned with her values, was accepting of all, and fostered a strong sense of community.

Since coming here, Erin has volunteered when possible, putting her technology talents to work with Defending Democracy, joining one of the Pryde support groups, and participated in a wonderful 4-week course on supporting non-binary and transgender families, where she got to engage in complex intergenerational conversations with like-minded individuals.

UUC has been a place of reprieve and happiness for Erin, where she often leaves service with a smile and full heart. Being in a place filled with such joy, Erin is thrilled to make her membership official!

*UUC has
been a place
of reprieve
and
happiness.*

Jennifer Bailey was raised in the Presbyterian Church of America community in Hampton, VA but left the church as a pre-teen. She didn't find her spiritual home until 2019 when she found our Congregation and Isabel Berney was the first person Jennifer met. She writes, "Thank you all for giving me a place for my spirit to grow. A place where I feel loved. A place that accepts and allows me to give my heart and love freely." She's worked at Volvo Trucks for 26 years where she is a Sales Engineer, the highest salaried union position and the only woman in that grade.



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Welcome, New Members!

Jennifer's 27-year-old daughter and husband live in Hampton where the rest of her family still resides. She loves live music, cold IPAs, laughing out loud, long hugs, being a voice and advocate for what is right and just, her family and friends, her GSD (German Shephard Dog) Lana, meeting new friends, and spending time at her Hatteras beach house.

*Thank you for
giving me a
place for my
spirit to grow.*



Peter Binkley, sometimes known as Bink, has been a Unitarian Universalist since before he was born. Both his parents and all four of his grandparents were UU, so it's pretty much in his blood. In 1989 he was initiated into Gardnerian Wicca and has been a practicing witch ever since. Peter has two beautiful offspring; Adelina is 15 and Peregrine is 30. Mr. Binkley also has about 300 students between the ages of 5 and 11 to whom he teaches STEM (that's Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) at Gilbert Linkous Elementary School in Blacksburg. In his spare time Bink enjoys inventing and making things, singing, gardening, archery, cooking and eating, dancing in the kitchen with the music blasting, and spending time in nature. He is excited to become an official member of this lovely congregation where he has found his spiritual home.

Patsy Lavender has lived in Blacksburg since 1984 where she and her husband raised two children and had careers at Virginia Tech. A native of East Tennessee, she has lived almost all her life in these Appalachian mountains which sustain her and give her solace. After retiring from VT's School of Performing Arts, she now enjoys time with friends, gardening, reading, and attending local arts performances — and is always open to new learning and new adventures.



Although not previously involved with any local religious group, she already has been involved in UUC's Surviving Spouses support group and some of the Defending Democracy activities. After "lurking" on zoom every Sunday morning for several months, Patsy is drawn to join UUC for the common shared values, commitment to actions, and inclusive welcoming community. She looks forward to having a spiritual home and sharing the fellowship and activities of this rich community.

Welcome, New Members!



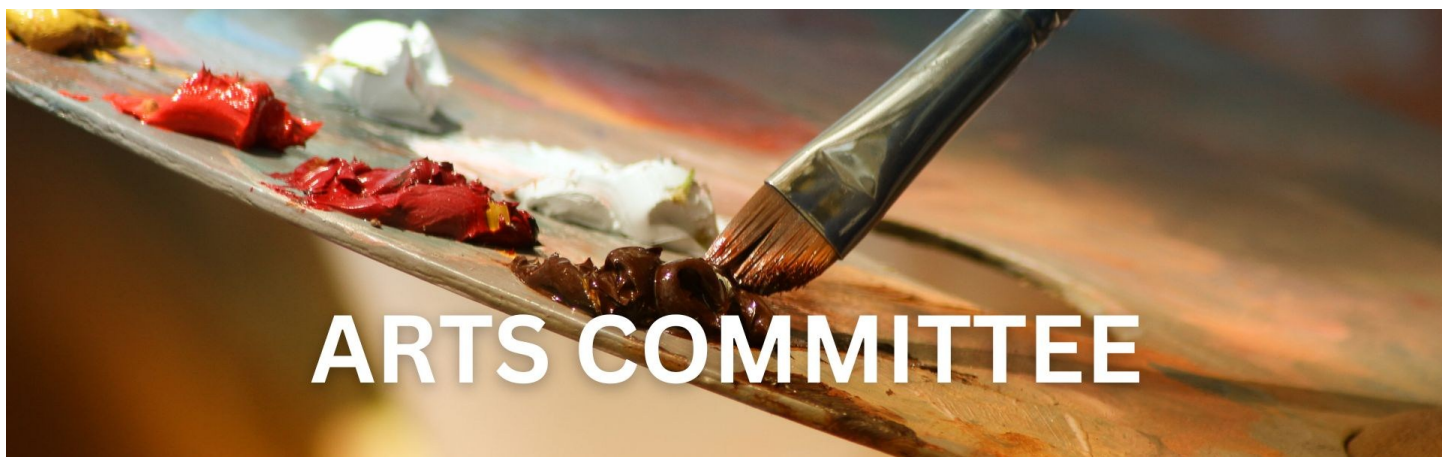
Kieran Lindsey is an urban wildlife biologist, a Graduate Program Director for Virginia Tech, and personal assistant to her Wire Fox Terrier, Sprite. She's also an author, a blogger, and a periodic podcaster. Kieran began this life's journey in St. Louis, Missouri, but she must have been a tumbleweed in a past life because she's certainly been blown hither and yon in this one, including moves to a half-dozen U.S. states, one Scandinavian country... and most recently to UUC which feel like a great place to finally put down some roots.

Hilary Lips moved to the New River Valley in 1989 to take a position in the Psychology Department at Radford University. She and her husband, Wayne, had been teaching at the University of Winnipeg for many years, and they both reveled in the milder climate and especially the reliably breathtaking springtime in southwest Virginia. Whenever they had spare time, they walked and walked and walked. After retiring a few years ago, they enjoyed having more opportunities to spend time with family and friends, to travel, and to explore new walking routes. Wayne died last year, and, despite the ache in her heart, Hilary continues to find joy and solace in all those things. She is grateful to have discovered in UUC, a warm and welcoming community that aligns with her values, and she looks forward to participating joyfully in this community over the coming years.



Janette Parrish moved to Blacksburg in 1977 with her husband, Dave, and two sons, Joe and Nathan. A stay-at-home mom, she was also a community volunteer, a reupholster, a furniture refinisher, a painter of walls, window frames, and trim, and a gardener. She is joyful to have found this loving, caring community at UUC.

“
...joyful to
have found
a loving,
caring
community
at UUC.
”



ARTS COMMITTEE

The Arts Committee is celebrating the artistic talent of our community, and we hope you'll take part in our upcoming activities. All are welcome; no artistic training is necessary!

Summer Art Show: Beginning in early June, we'll showcase the work of our members and friends. Please keep an eye out in the front and back lobbies for your favorite UUC artist.

Children's art workshop: On June 8, during the service, students in our summer LFD classes will create pieces for our fall youth exhibit. We'll supply all the materials and lead the workshop. We hope your child can join us.

Fall Youth Exhibit: We invite anyone under age 13 to share your art in our lobbies! In addition to the art workshop scheduled for June 8, we'd love to have young artists contribute their individual pieces.

2025 Craft Fair: this November. Fellow crafty people, please watch for upcoming announcements about sharing your handmade goodies. You might already be working on projects, so please keep this opportunity in mind!

Let's grow the group: if you'd like to serve on the Arts Committee, there's a place for you. Please consider lending a hand as we plan upcoming events and exhibits.

Enjoying someone's creative gifts is one of the best parts of belonging to the UUCNRV community. Jennifer is excited to hear from you! Please contact Jennifer Thomas at jkirstenjuu@gmail.com for more information or to get involved.

A background image showing several blue and green paper cutouts of people holding hands in a circle, symbolizing community and support.

ONGOING GATHERINGS

Support Groups

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 from 6-7 PM to help one another on our journeys. For more info and the Zoom link, contact [Katherine](#) or [Lisa](#).

Caregivers Support

Share your experiences and challenges on the 2nd Tuesdays of each month from 7-8:30 PM via [Zoom](#). [Contact](#).

NAMI Connections Support

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. [Email](#) for the Zoom link.

Surviving Spouses Support Group

Meets 2nd and 4th Tuesdays at 2 PM. If you have lost a spouse or partner and would appreciate support, please contact [Rev. Pam](#).

NAMI Family Support

Family and friends of persons living with mental illness are welcome to join this NAMI support group on the 3rd Wednesday of each month from 6-7:30 PM. [Email](#) for the Zoom link.

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.

Greetings from your new administrator!



By Jenny Fairchild

For the past 6 months, I've been serving as Administrator of the UUC. It's been a true delight getting to know the people of UUC and to learn more about this congregation's history, mission, and vision. I am honored to be a part of a tradition that is committed to the UU values of Justice, Equity, Transformation, Pluralism, Interdependence, Generosity, and Love. I've attended various UU services in just about every town I've lived in, including Knoxville, Glen Allen, and Richmond. In a former life, I worked as a health educator at Planned Parenthood and supplemented the Oak Ridge, TN O.W.L. program. I have always loved being around UUs!

Before starting at UUC, I worked for 12 years at an Episcopal church, and before that a couple of non-profits. I am so happy to now find a place that beautifully merges these two lights in my soul. I believe faith communities — especially those that answer the call to social action — are vital to our society. I mean, where else can you sing and pray and hold babies and wipe tears and light candles and laugh together and fight for justice and honor the end of life and celebrate milestones, all while planning the next good potluck?

“The place [the Spirit] calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.”

— *Frederick Buechner*

I grew up in the New River Valley and always had plans to move back here “someday”.... That “someday” came two years ago, after a deep stirring led my family to return. I am married to Micah, a Human Resources director, and we have one child, Jonah, who is in middle school. We love playing games, snuggling our beloved schnauzer, hiking, watching movies, and being with family and friends.

I am an active member of Blacksburg Presbyterian Church where I serve as a youth advisor and the elder for youth ministry. In this time and place, being around the hopefulness and silliness of teens brings me so much joy. I also love to read, listen to podcasts, and have big and small conversations with just about anyone. I am an ENFP, Enneagram 9, Hufflepuff. Shew, that's a lot about me. I'd love to get to know YOU! Please: stop by my office, give me a call, or reach out for a time to chat.

I believe administration is ministry. I am grateful to do this work, together.
— Jenny Fairchild

ONGOING GATHERINGS

Women's Lunch | Fridays at 11:30 AM at local restaurants or noon at UUC.

UUYAs | Unitarian Universalist Young Adults (UUYAs) A group for Young Adults in their teens and twenties. Gather to play games, engage with the community, and support our congregation each Tuesday, 7-10 PM. For more information, contact uuya@uucnrv.org.

Women's & Men's Breakfasts | Gather any Monday you're able 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.

Sages | Gather 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](#).

Men's Group | Open to anyone who identifies as male and would like to connect with others. Gathers in the evening on the 1st Tuesday of each month. Contact [Graham](#) for more.

Thank you for reading our Summer 2025 Newsletter!

UUC Unitarian Universalist Congregation

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