



Unitarian
Universalist
Congregation

UUC

inspire • create • transform

SUMMER 2026 NEWSLETTER

Message from our Minister

Welcome Summer! We've completed the congregational/school year with all kinds of wonderful celebrations, including but not limited to the ordination of the Reverend Dr. Ellen Plummer; the bridging of our high school youth into young adulthood; a lovely flower celebration where we recognized our devoted religious education volunteers, newest members, staff, and the fantastic Eagle Scout project completed by youth Carter Parrish. And we've welcomed our new ministerial intern, Casey Akers. Phew! What a time we've had.



*Rev. Pam
Philips*

The annual congregational meeting had us confirming and adding to our Board of Trustees – Jim Kern, Joy Brown, and Nancy Bodenhorn (replacing long-serving Judy Snoke) – and electing new members of the Executive Board – president-elect Doug Pfeiffer, treasurer Ashley Dugan, secretary Angela Stewart, and at-large members Rene Lowry and Jennifer Thomas. We also approved a budget that was made possible through the generosity of our members...

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Message from the Minister *continued from previous page*



and friends and a special anonymous donor who took us up to our pledge drive goal. We are flourishing because of all those who have said yes to leadership (including continuing board president Cassy Kost and at large-member Helen Renqvist and retiring president Chris Long, treasurer Wayne Neu, and at-large members Joseph Cooley and Andy Roberts). Not to mention all those who do the work of committees and teams. Take a look at their [annual reports](#) and marvel at all the time, energy, and care that go into helping our congregation thrive.

Now, many of us enter a time of rest and rejuvenation. I'll be attending our online UUA General Assembly the week of June 14th (perhaps not so restful, but definitely reconnecting with the larger movement). In July, Jamie and I will be attending the Southeast UU Summer Institute at Radford University, enjoying daily worship and workshops with UU's from near and far (a time of renewal). Then we'll be flying out west for some travel in Oregon and a week at a cabin in Washington with my family (ah, here's the rest! Think of me floating and paddling on a serene lake).

Life at UUC will go on, with our usual weekly gatherings for socializing and support. Our worship services will focus more on Unitarian Universalist values centered on Love (justice, interdependence, generosity, pluralism, equity, and transformation).

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While music director Jared Gibbs is enjoying a well-deserved vacation, we'll enjoy guest musicians and volunteer-led Summer Breakfast Club performances on June 21 and July 19 (all are welcome to join in!). Make sure to read the announcement emails to hear about special gatherings and opportunities to serve. The grounds always need watering and mowing – your volunteering will allow some of stalwart workers to have some rest and give you some exercise and a good feeling of contributing!

My wish for all of us this summer season is time for some rest and rejuvenation – whether they are stolen moments in a busy life or longer periods of adventure or calm. No matter how you spend your time this summer, consider collecting a small amount of water from a special place – a creek, river, lake, ocean, pool, or puddle – to bring back to UUC for our ingathering water service on August 30 and the start of the next congregational year. It is good to celebrate the rhythms of our life together.

In faith and gratitude,

Rev. Pam

*Here's to another year
in the life of our
congregation!*





Thankful for a Great Year

As we wind down our congregational year of 2025-2026, I wanted to start with an enormous “thank you” from the board to everyone who serves the congregation and this community in any capacity. Everybody from the leaders of our many committees and social groups to those who just check in with those around them and lend a helping hand, ensure we keep our community welcoming and that everything works. You’ve made the UUC a great place to be, and it’s been my highest honor to serve as your 2025-2026 Board President.



**By Chris Long,
Board President**

Thanks to all your support through our Stewardship Pledge Drive, as well as the outrageous generosity of an anonymous member of our community, we have raised 100% of what we asked for next year’s budget. While you may have seen special attention paid to this anonymous donor’s contributions, I wanted to take this space to thank each and every one of you for your individual pledges. Your support helps to keep things happening around here, and I want you to know that whatever you’re able to give is greatly appreciated.

In reviewing the board’s activities from the past year, I would like to highlight our largest task: reevaluating our strategic plan.

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We are at the point where we are asking for your input on where you want to see the congregation go in the next 5 years. This survey will not be the last time your input is requested, but we want to ensure we are on the right track. [Please take the time to fill out this survey](#) and keep an eye out through the next year for any future requests.

In addition to working on the strategic plan, the Board helped facilitate many other activities around the UUC. From working with Carter Parrish on his Eagle Scout project to add a gravel path to the lower fire pit all the way to helping get the Safety Committee working in response to political violence, we have done what we can to help make the UUC the best place for our congregants and the larger community. Please remember that the board exists to serve your needs, so if you see something that needs to be addressed, reach out to a board member. They would love to discuss

whatever is going on and direct your requests as best as we can.

I started this message with a note from the board, but I want to end with a personal message from me. When I walked through the doors for the first time in late 2021, I had recently decided that I was going to drop out of grad school. I felt like a failure who was destined for very little in life, even though I knew I had the potential to be so much more. Shortly after showing up regularly, I was asked to help teach RE partially because people saw something in me I wasn't able to. Through your continued support and being part of various teams and committees here, I was able to rebuild my shaky confidence and eventually get to where I am now. The UUC has been with me through some of the hardest times in my adult life, and I want to say thank you to each and every one of you. Please keep doing what you do here, because it has a real impact.

Wishing all the best,
Chris Long

Lifespan Faith Development

Summer Religious Education

This summer our children will travel the world learning about different countries and making summer smoothies to enjoy the flavors of the world. Here's where we'll visit:

Departure Date	Flag	Country
June 7		Syria
June 14		Spain
June 21		Tonga
June 28		Brazil
July 5		Egypt
July 12		Australia
July 19		Japan
July 26		South Korea
August 2		Greece
August 9		Canada
August 16		Belgium



Family and Multigenerational Opportunities

The *NEW* Buddy Project

Make a new friend at UUC. Our Buddy Project will now be open to all ages wishing to get to know someone new. No longer will we have "Big Buddies" and "Little Buddies." Mailboxes will stay up all year, and the expectation is that you leave a message for your buddy at least twice a month on average. Less pressure, more time, more friend-making opportunities.

Sign up to participate in [Buddy Project 2026-7](#).

Monthly Community Game and Craft Nights

Come to UUC for a night of crafting and games. A light kid-friendly meal and snacks will be provided. Bring your friends! Each month will feature plenty of games as well as a **highlighted craft activity**. Select Saturdays **from 6-9pm**.



June 27—Learn to Crochet. Bring your own knitting/crocheting, or learn to crochet with Rachel. Yarn and hooks will be available.

July 25—Collage. All kinds of materials will be available for crafting and collage making.

August 29—Friendship Bracelets. Learn many different ways to make friendship bracelets.



Register for Fall Religious Education

Fall RE will begin on September 13th. Here's what will be happening in each grade:

- **Preschool and Kindergarten:** World Religions and UU Values Part 1
- **Grades 1-3:** World Religions and UU Values Part 2
- **Grades 4-5:** OWL (Our Whole Lives Sexuality Education Sept.-Nov.,) MOSAIC (anti racism curriculum Nov.-Jan.,) and Magic of UU (a social justice curriculum Feb.-May)
- **Grades 6-12:** Games that Build Community and MOSAIC anti racism curriculum.

Other Sunday Morning options for older youth include Coming of Age for grades 8 and up and Teen assisting for grades 9 and older.

Sunday evening youth group will meet weekly for high school and twice a month for middle school.

OWL for grades K-1 will be offered in the spring semester.

[Registration for Returning Families](#)

[Registration for New Families](#)

W E L C O M E

NEW MEMBERS

A year ago, **Elizabeth Dell** moved from Texas to Virginia to be closer to family. She came to UUC her first Sunday here and made friends right away. She has become a regular at the Monday women's breakfast group and the Friday JUULIETS, is active in a Soul Matters group, and volunteers in the garden. She appreciates UUC's thoughtful, creative worship style, welcoming community, and deeply held values--self-discovery and transformation, generosity and love. She is grateful to have found a church community with whom to share the journey!

Rob Ingenito, Jr.: "I have been an active UU since 2009(ish) at two small Fellowships in Northern NJ. I transferred with my job at the USPS to Pulaski for a change in scenery as well as to be somewhat closer to my partner's parents. Since being at UUC, I have stepped up and organized the ongoing blood drive, which has been a success. I have plans to try to get a fundraiser program for UUC together, just need to get those ducks in a row. I have also been an active greeter on Sunday mornings. This past year -- I can't believe how fast that went! -- has been a welcome change and I am glad that I made the move. Outside of UUC, I live in Pulaski with my partner and two cats. I've gotten active at work with the USPS in Pulaski by becoming the Union Steward for Pulaski and stepping into other Union roles there. If you have any questions about me, just ask."



WELCOME

NEW MEMBERS



Jess Ireland: "I spent my childhood in Massachusetts and lived in Florida from my teenage years until I was 30, but I didn't find home until I moved to the NRV 17 years ago. I live in Floyd County, up a hill, in the middle of trees and nature, with a lovely view from my front porch, which is wonderful. I love listening to music, I shoot possibly too much pool, and I enjoy playing video games, reading, travelling, and being out in nature. I'm currently in the middle of a major

transitional phase of my life - after working in academic libraries for 25 years, I started nursing school at Virginia Western this past August and I'll be starting an externship with Carilion at Roanoke Memorial June 1. Nursing school has been fantastic and I'm grateful that I've been able to make even a small difference in peoples' lives by sharing my joy and empathy. I would like to thank everyone for making me feel so welcome and I'm looking forward to getting to know you all better. Fair warning, I don't hold back when I laugh or give hugs."

Lori Morrey: "Born in Pittsburgh, I've lived my adult life in the Appalachian mountains, which have always felt like home. I was raised Catholic, which never felt like home.



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WELCOME

NEW MEMBERS

(Lori Morrey, continued from previous page)

"At my friends' wedding during college, the Unitarian ceremony was so meaningful that I made an appointment with the minister. Our conversation confirmed for me that I had found my Spiritual Home. I am a longtime regular volunteer at Glade Road Growing where my job of choice is pulling up weeds. I love living here, the people, the music scene, films at the Lyric, hiking, and being a member of this marvelous congregation."



Steve and Diane Rountree were raised in Southwest Louisiana and lived much of their adult lives in Lafayette, LA where they raised two children, Derek and Cindy. In 2018 they moved to Christiansburg, VA to get off of the Gulf Coast and to be near their son and his family (their daughter and her family live near Versailles, France – moving to France not a viable option!?). After a bit of searching "for a community

connection," they followed their son and his family to UUC, and they are delighted with their experience.

WELCOME

NEW MEMBERS



Anna Vijayan started attending the UU shortly after moving to the NRV with her husband and son in 2017. Her connection to the congregation deepened with her participation in the Parent Covenant Group starting in 2020. This past year was her fifth year as an RE teacher in the PreK classroom! Outside the UU, she is a stay-at-home mom with a passion for local politics and public education— she has spoken before the Montgomery County Public School Board and the Board of Supervisors on a wide variety of educational issues including equitable school funding. Prior to moving to Virginia, she worked as an adjunct professor teaching undergraduates at Brandeis University, from which she also received her doctorate in mathematics. Her son, Avi, has attended RE classes since Kindergarten and will be an eighth grader at BMS in the fall.

When you see any of our new members around, extend a warm welcome into membership at UUC!



'Round the Grounds

By Susan Baker

Many things have occurred on the UUC grounds with the kickoff being the Big Event workday on April 11. Over 30 energetic UUC congregants combined with 8 VT Big Event volunteers washed winter grime off signs, benches and chairs; moved wood chips and mulch; cleaned up the parking lots; put equipment together for the playground; pruned and hauled brush — and proved that many helping hands make the work fun and efficient. The record number of UUC volunteers was inspiring. Thank you to all who helped on the grounds and in the kitchen!



'Round the Grounds

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The picnic area by the church has experienced a huge accessibility improvement thanks to Carter Parrish and his crew of helpers. Carter has earned the Eagle Scout rank, the highest award in Scouting BSA. His project



was making the picnic area accessible for those using walkers and wheelchairs and those who feel unstable walking on woodchips.

The fire pit had to be temporarily dismantled, enabling the area to be leveled. Large amounts of dirt were excavated; thousands of pounds of different types of gravel were spread on the leveled surface and then were compacted. A gorgeously designed base was installed for the fire pit. Landscape concrete borders were installed to define the packed gravel from the woodchips. In addition, Carter's dad, Joe Parrish, put in a new (and sophisticated) drainage system to prevent water erosion of chips and gravel in the picnic area. Carter, his parents, Joe and Angela Parrish, and his scout volunteers have created a space that is user friendly and beautiful.



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The UUYAs (Unitarian Universalists Young Adults) also had a role for improvement of the picnic area — installing conduit for electrical outlets and tree lighting, improvement of landscaping, and repositioning the picnic tables to enhance safety and accessibility. Patrick Feucht assisted with the electrical work; Lucas Machi and Niko Rensberger kept the UUYA's on task and rebuilt the firepit; and George Lally added to Carter's landscape wall so that additional seating space could be created. Definitely check out the new picnic area!

The street entrance saw another big improvement: Susan and Bob Sisk dug up the evergreens that were partially blocking the entrance sign. Susan Sisk, with the help of Niko Rensberger, hauled healthy dirt to amend the soil in front of the sign. Susan then planted bulbs and flowers to make the entrance inviting.



The fringe trees at the entrance of the Memorial Garden have been in full, glorious bloom for several weeks. Fringe trees are native to Virginia but are not often seen in this area (We have five Fringe Trees on the UUC grounds.). The spring blossoms are gorgeous and resemble a fringe. Spring flowers make the gardens magical places. Neighbors, friends, and congregants have marveled at the explosion of color. Additional native flower species have been added to the crescent garden, located on the side of the church. *...continued on next page*

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Make some time to enjoy our grounds this summer!

VOLUNTEERS ARE ALWAYS NEEDED

We are grateful for all our grounds volunteers and appreciate folks who've stepped up to help with the "extra" summer tasks of mowing grass and watering plants. If you'd like to help take care of our grounds, we welcome you! Reach out to Rev. Pam to learn more and sign up.





We are an active and involved congregation, providing many opportunities to connect with others and socialize. Also, helping others is an integral part of UUC. Thanks to the leadership of the Connections Committee, we are committed to supporting our shared UU principles through action and service within our congregation!

NEW! Sign Up for a Phone Buddy

If you live alone, would you like to be paired with a phone buddy? Phone buddies will make contact with each other in the mornings as a way of checking up on one another. If this interests you, please contact [Lisa Evanylo](#).



Summer Potluck: RSVP Now

If there is interest, UUC's Connection Committee will host a potluck picnic on Saturday, July 18 at 5 PM in our picnic area (weather permitting). Come enjoy a yummy meal, community, firepit, and s'mores. If you plan to join us (all ages welcome!) or for more information, contact [Lisa Evanylo](#).




VOTING RIGHTS TEAM



Virginia Primary Election is August 4: make a plan to vote!

This year Virginia's primary election will be held on August 4. Throughout the state, offices on the ballot will include the US Senate, US House of Representatives and some local offices.

Register to vote or update an existing registration:

- Through Friday, July 24.
- [Use the Citizen Portal.](#) 
- Voters may register and vote using a provisional ballot in-Person after July 24 through Election Day.
- Contact your local registrar's office for more.

Early, in-person voting period:

- Friday, June 19, 2026 through 5:00 p.m., Saturday, August 1, 2026.
- Note: if local office is closed on June 19 for the state holiday, then the office shall be open for early voting on Thursday June 18.
- Contact your local registrar's office for all early voting and satellite location information.
- Voter registration offices will be open for early voting on Saturday, July 25.

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VOTING RIGHTS TEAM



DEFENDING DEMOCRACY

Apply for a ballot to be mailed to you:

- Through 5:00 p.m., Friday, July 24, 2026.
- Your request must be received by your local registrar's office by 5:00 p.m.
- Apply for an absentee ballot online using the Citizen Portal.
- See who is on your ballot by viewing the candidate lists.

VOTE! It is a right and a responsibility. Vote as though democracy depends on it, because it does!



Are you signed up for the Defending Democracy newsletter?

"The Democracy Advocate, A Guide to Strengthening our Democratic Institutions" is published regularly by our Defending Democracy Group.

Never miss an issue! Visit our website to read issues and to sign up to be added to the mailing list.

[READ MORE »](#)

A Legacy that Lives On



**to George Lally,
winner of the
2025-2026
Isabel Berney
Award for
Exceptional
Service**

*George is pictured on the right,
with Board President Chris Long*



Member Isabel Berney left a legacy at UUC, which is one reason our annual service award was created in her honor and named after her. Stories of Isabel's warm and welcoming spirit are still told long after her passing. Some may remember her use of this small wheelbarrow, a perfect size for her to use as she lovingly maintained our grounds. Our grounds ministry has found a sweet way to use it now -- greeting folks with beautiful flowers as they enter our building!





STEWARDSHIP

Thank you for your continued generosity with your financial support of our congregation!

UUC's fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30. That means a new fiscal year is almost upon us.

This time of year, congregants are making final payments for the 2025-2026 fiscal year, and also transitioning to contributions to the 2026-2027 year.

It helps us — and you! — greatly if you can follow some tips for financial success:



Include the pledge year in the memo line of your checks.

This includes your bank's bill-pay checks. Note that 2025-2026 ends June 30 and the 2026-2027 fiscal year begins July 1.



If you have **scheduled payments** through your bank's online bill pay feature, that's a fantastic way to fulfill your pledge. Thank you! Don't forget to log into your bank to **update** the amount, start/stop dates, and memo line (with current fiscal year).



Online payment though Vanco is certainly convenient, yet it also incurs fees. Please consider donating to offset these fees that are paid by UUC, or consider scheduling auto pay through your bank. Visit our website to learn more.

Thank you for giving to UUC!



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 the second Sunday of each month. Bring your family and friends and a dish to share and we will enjoy a delicious meal together. Please include a small card with the ingredients for those with food allergies.

ONGOING GATHERINGS

Women's Lunch | Fridays at 12 PM. Contact [Elizabeth](#) for more.

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.

Writers' Group | Writers of all types are invited to gather to work on their craft and connect and support each other in their writing projects. Meets via Zoom, usually the 3rd Thursday of each month. Contact [Britton](#) for more.

UUC Unitarian Universalist Congregation

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