



Unitarian  
Universalist  
Congregation

UUC

inspire • create • transform

## NEWSLETTER | WINTER 2024

### *Message from our Minister*

As we embark on the winter months, I'm mindful that we can be pulled in many different directions. Some of us find that the longer nights and colder weather invite us to time alone – wrapping up in warm sweaters and blankets, lighting candles or fires, settling in with a good book or a beloved movie. We seek time of quiet and stillness. Some of us find that all the traditional festivities of the holiday season invite us to spend time with others – gathering with friends and family to feast, party, and exchange gifts. We seek a time of frivolity and celebration.

Still others find that the winter landscapes invite us to go outdoors – taking brisk walks amid the leafless trees or skiing down mountain slopes.



*Rev. Pam  
Philips*

We seek movement and adventure. Our worship theme for December reminds us to practice presence – which means whichever invitation we accept, we are encouraged to be fully present to where we are, who we're with, and what we are doing. Even if we find ourselves accepting many different invitations, we may find that taking even a moment to appreciate where we are NOW can help deepen our appreciation of all life has to offer.

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# Message from the Minister

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We'll explore **Living Love through the Practice of Presence** in worship services and covenant groups. Even if you are not in a small group, everyone is invited to explore the resources available [on our website](#). In addition to being present at our regular Sunday services, you might attend the festive [holiday concert](#) organized by our outstanding pianist Jared Gibbs or our annual [Christmas Eve service](#), complete with favorite songs and readings, culminating with lighting candles as we sing Silent Night. Everyone is also invited to participate in the [reverse advent activity](#) – adding a food item each day to a box that will be donated to the Interfaith Food Pantry at the end of the holiday season. It's good to be present to ourselves, to our congregation, and to the wider community.

I'm also mindful that as we move out of the month of December and all its busyness and distractions, that the new year will bring challenges and opportunities to more fully live into our values and principles. It seems likely that while we may have a much smoother transition of power than we experienced four years ago, some may feel anxious and worried about the year ahead. One way to be ready to respond to any concerning policies or legislation is to stay present and focused on our values – **Justice, Equity, Transformation, Pluralism, Interdependence, Generosity – and the central value of Love**. One of my favorite UU taglines is "Love the Hell out of the World." If we stay present to who we are, what we value, and how we can create the world we want for ourselves and our children, then we can answer whatever calls us to action.

My wish is that we may be present to all that brings us beauty, joy, and love in this season. - Rev. Pam



*One of my  
favorite  
UU taglines  
is 'Love the  
Hell out of  
the World.'*





# UUC

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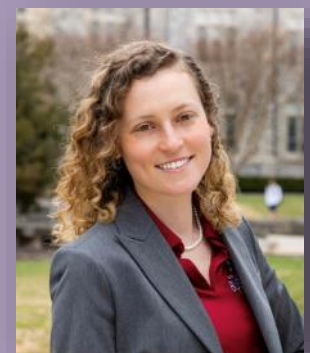
## A Transformative Community

Reflecting on these first few months as a new board member brings collective perspective. I'm appreciative to be in a spiritual community that values love, as our president mentioned in her previous letter from the board.

Over these months I have been able to gain broader knowledge of our board and congregation structure. What better time for growth, learning, and getting to know the board than on new and challenging waters while Pam was away on sabbatical.

A kudos to Rachel Craine, the sabbatical team, and others who stepped up in Pam's absence. Upon Pam's return we have gained a new administrator; welcome Jenny Fairchild, the board and congregation are pleased to have her with us!

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By Cassy Kost,  
UUC Board  
Member



*Changes may seem messy or uncomfortable at times, but the results can be beautiful.*



Many requests have been reviewed and the board has received reports from our members on improvements to facilities and grounds. We continue to lean into our board covenant values of respect, trust, deep listening, curiosity, and fierce dedication to diversity and inclusion in our commitment to the community we serve. In turn, we are searching for others to serve, specifically on the Endowment Committee, and give great thanks to Bill Baker for his years of service and leadership. In the evolution of our music program we are seeking thoughts to implement grass roots creativity moving forward with a harmonious vision of our musical community. Please reach out to us at [board@uucnrv.org](mailto:board@uucnrv.org) with interest and/or expressions on these topics.

There remain many changes and transitions in the world and our congregation as we approach this coming winter season which gives us time to reflect on our newly added UUC value of transformation. Changes may seem messy or uncomfortable at times, but the results can be beautiful. Only together can we rise up to make transformational change. Let us move into the holidays and the coming new year embracing our value of transformation and continuing to move with love at the center.

- Cassy Kost







# 2024-2025 SUNDAYS THIS SEASON

*Our worship theme in December is  
**Living Love through the Practice of Presence.***

12/1 – **Being Here Now** – Rev. Pam & Cynthia Baute

What does it mean to be “present” and how might practicing presence help us to center love in our lives? We’ll begin our exploration of this month’s theme together in a multigenerational worship service, providing everyone with opportunities to practice presence.

12/8 – **Presence of an Absence** - Rev. Pam & Gretchen Luke

This time of year, with the darkness of winter and the light of the holidays, we are often reminded of the people who are no longer in our lives. How can we honor and remember them in ways that fills our souls?

12/15 – **In the Presence of the Divine** – Rev. Pam & Victoria Taylor

As we approach the holiday that celebrates the incarnation of God in the form of an infant, we’ll explore how we might feel the presence of the holy in our own lives.

12/22 – **Multigenerational No-Rehearsal Play**

Join us for our annual multigenerational, participatory celebration of the holidays with a home-made version of the beloved holiday classic “How the Grinch Stole Christmas.”

12/24 – **Christmas Eve Service**, 5:00 pm

Come celebrate this most holy night with traditional stories, song, and candlelight. [More details.](#)

12/29 – **Standing at the Threshold** – Rev. Janet Onnie & Denise Martin

Starting at a new year fraught with uncertainty begs for strategies to uphold us in the present and sustain us into the future. Let’s explore some of these strategies and envision the possibilities for the coming year.

*In January and February, we’ll explore the themes of **Living Love through the Practice of Story and the Practice of Inclusion.** You can find more about these services once they are posted on the [Upcoming Services](#) page. Unless otherwise indicated, Services this Winter are in person at UUC and virtual via [Zoom](#) each Sunday at 10 AM. We welcome you to join us!*



# A HOLIDAY SAMPLER

A CONCERT OF CLASSICAL, JAZZ AND HOLIDAY FAVORITES

Join us for a holiday concert filled with variety. Music will include selections from *The Nutcracker*, holiday favorites, and, of course, our annual sing-along to close the program.

*Saturday, December 21, 7 PM*


Free Admission | Donations Accepted All donations support Sequoia Housing Partnership

<https://www.sequoiahousingpartnership.org/>

Saturday, December 21, 2024 | 7 PM Unitarian Universalist Congregation 1301 Gladewood Drive Blacksburg Refreshments to follow

*Please invite your friends and neighbors!*





*Provide food  
and shelter to  
our unhoused  
neighbors*

## TO OUR HOUSE

This winter our congregation will again participate in the **To Our House (TOH)** program. This **local homeless shelter program** is for single men and women. Active only during winter months, it provides a place to sleep, a warm dinner, breakfast, and a bag lunch. We will be participating during two separate weeks.

First, during the week of **January 4-10** we will be partnering with Glade Church. Our friends at Glade will serve as the host church and UUC will serve as the **support church**. In our support role, we will be providing all meals for participants. Dinner meals are assembled from dishes provided by UUC members. For each day of our support, we will provide a **main course**, a **side or salad**, and a **dessert**. Each dish must be large enough to serve 12-15 persons. Supplies for breakfasts and lunches are purchased using your 1/2 plate offerings and other donations.

Secondly, during the week of **February 15-21** we will serve as both **host church** and **support church**. Our TOH guests will be using Elarth hall, kitchen, and library from around 5:30 PM until 6:30 AM. In addition to providing all meals as a support church, during February we will be taking on additional responsibilities as **host church**. Members will be needed to serve as **hosts, van drivers, clean-uppers, laundry-doers, and other roles**.

Each year this is an exciting undertaking for our congregation that takes the time and talents of many volunteers to make it a success. Stop by our table in Elarth after the service to discuss how you might contribute. Additional information, including online signup, will be provided in future weekly announcements.—Joe Powers





# DEFENDING DEMOCRACY



The steering committee for the Defending Democracy project at UUC wishes to extend their appreciation for the support we received from the members of the congregation over the past eight months. Obviously, the results of November were not what we wanted, but now we have to work harder to ensure that liberties and social justice issues are not trampled upon by the new administration.

To that end, the steering committee — Bob Stimson, Mark Benson, Britton Gildersleeve, Jamie McReynolds, Jim Flowers, and myself — is beginning discussions on next steps for the group. We are in the very preliminary stages and welcome input from members of the congregation as to: 1) willingness to be involved in the planning stages, or 2) ideas we should consider going forward. Please feel free to contact myself or any members of the steering committee with your ideas and thoughts.

Unfortunately, I am certain that issues of concern to UUC and challenges to our principles will be forthcoming in the next four years. We need to be prepared to respond to these. And, most importantly, we need to think about the next five to ten years and how we position this nation to take positive steps towards reconciliation and progress on human rights and social issues.—Jim Bohland

By Jim Bohland

*Please share  
your ideas  
for how this  
project can  
move forward  
and if you  
are willing  
to be more  
involved.*



# Lifespan Faith Development

## What's New in Children's Religious Education?

It has been a busy fall in RE. Our 4th and 5th graders have completed the *Our Whole Lives* (OWL) program, and have transformed back in to witches and wizards working for justice with the *Magic of UU* curriculum.

The K-1 class will take a break from *Picture Book UU*, to take part in K-1 OWL starting in February. [Sign up Here.](#)

The 2-3 class is wrapping up *Super Hero Academy*, and our super heroes have been very engaged. They even wrote a thoughtful letter to the UUC board suggesting improvements such as adding a waterpark or an ice skating rink to the church. In January, our second and third graders will begin "*Let's Learn with Bluey*," a UU values curriculum.



Pre K: Rainbow Connection

Our middle schoolers continue to learn and have fun with *Games that Build Community*.

Our 8th and 9th graders have been tackling some tough issues and having good discussions in the Coming of Age program as they work to identify their guiding values and unique spiritual beliefs.



Thanks to everyone who brought in cans of pasta to help us meet our goal! We collected over 400 cans for the food pantry's holiday bag program.

**Register for all Children and Youth programming [HERE](#)**

### Middle School Youth Group

MSYG meets once a month, usually on a Friday, for fun activities for youth in grades 6-8. Upcoming meetings:

**December 6**—MSYG @ Holiday Parade

*Attend the parade together.  
Meet at UUC @6:30pm*

**January 10**—MSYG at NRV Superbowl

*Bowling and Laser tag. Meet there  
6:30-8:30pm*

**February 21**—MSYG Project Linus

*Make blankets for Project Linus and  
play games at UUC. 6:30-8:30pm*

### High School Youth Group

YRUU (Young Religious Unitarian Universalists) meets weekly Sundays from 6-8pm.

*YRUU goes to Spring Con  
at the Mountain*

*March 14-16*



The group is overseen by a the YAC (Youth-Adult Committee) which determines the group's activities for each month. Any youth interested in leadership is encouraged to attend the monthly YAC meetings. The next meeting will be **December 8 from 5-6pm**, before YRUU meets.

Here are some of the things we've accomplished this fall at UUC:

- In September the 4-5 class collected books which were used in the YRUU book sale, raising \$767.25 for our youth group's trip fund. Remaining books were donated to The Montgomery County Christmas Store, the Blacksburg library, and Total Action for Progress in Roanoke.
- In October, our Scary to be Hungry food drive collected over 1500 pounds of food, as well as cash, for a value of over \$3,300 for the Blacksburg Interfaith Food Pantry. We also collected over 400 cans of pasta for the holiday bag program that sends food home over the school breaks.
- In November, the Mitten Tree was covered in scarves, hats and mittens for the Montgomery County Christmas Store.
- Our middle school youth group made holiday gifts for several older members of our community, and our 2nd and 3rd grade class made holiday cards for some of our congregants that live further away.



## 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. [Save or Print a list here.](#)

December 1: canned vegetable

December 2: canned fruit

December 3: spaghetti sauce

December 4: pasta noodles

December 5: cereal

December 6: canned tuna

December 7: peanut butter (16 oz)

December 8: jelly

December 9: canned soup

December 10: mac and cheese

December 11: rice

December 12: dried beans

December 13: Hamburger Helper

December 14: canned vegetable

December 15: canned fruit

December 16: spaghetti sauce

December 17: pasta noodles

December 18: cereal

December 19: peanut butter (16 oz)

December 20: jelly

December 21: canned soup

December 22: mac and cheese

December 23: canned tuna

December 24: dried beans

December 25: Hamburger Helper



*Lifespan Faith Development*

## **Adult Religious Education Programs**

***The Fifth Dimension for Adults*** | Meets Wednesdays in Jan-Feb from 7-8:30 pm | Unitarian Rod Serling was one of American TV's most prolific writers and is best known for his science fiction television series, *The Twilight Zone*. He believed that the role of the writer was to "menace the public conscience." Throughout his life, he used radio, television, and film as "vehicles of social criticism", often clashing with television executives on issues ranging from censorship to racism to war. This study uses *Twilight Zone* episodes as an entry point for discussing values, ethics and important social justice issues. [Register](#) and gather on Zoom.

***New (Or Not-so-New) to UU*** | Whether you are brand new or have been attending UUC for decades, you are invited to participate in a five-part workshop diving into UU history, theology, polity, lifespan faith development, and social justice. Join Rev. Pam at 1 PM on Sunday afternoons January 5-February 2. [Register](#)

***UUA Common Read Discussion Group*** | Meets 4 Sundays in February from 3:30-5 PM | The Common Read, *Authentic Selves: Celebrating Trans and Nonbinary People and Their Families*, is a compilation of life stories and portraits of trans and nonbinary people, as well as their partners, parents, children, siblings, and chosen family members. Through interviews and photo portraits, the subjects invite readers into their real lives--their revelations, challenges, joys, and networks of support. Explore the nature of living authentically and the ways connections among us help us thrive. [Register](#)

***A House for Hope: Coming This Spring!*** | Rev. Pam will be offering a seven-session discussion of the book *A House for Hope: The Promise of Progressive Religion for the Twenty-first Century* by Rebecca Parker and John Buehrens starting in the spring. [Buy the book](#) and start reading in February!





*Lifespan Faith Development*

## Adult Religious Education Programs

### *Continuing Classes and Groups*

***Date With Death Club*** — Meets the 3rd Mondays from 6:30-8:30 PM

Join us for a philosophical and spiritual exploration of mortality in community, with a balance of humor and earnest regard for the topic of mortality. This program provides a safe[r] and brave[r] space to explore the often-taboo topic of our mortality. Each session stands alone.

[Register](#)

***Meditation Group*** — Meets Tuesdays 5:00-6:00 PM

Our meditation group meets weekly for those interested in starting or deepening their meditation practice. Meditators from all traditions and all levels of experience are welcome. In the Library and on [Zoom](#).

***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, on zoom. To learn more, contact Tim Pickering. [Zoom](#)

***The Synapse Salon*** | meets 3rd Thursdays at 7:30, Library & Zoom | This is a book and discussion group themed around the mind/brain and the science and philosophy related to them. Currently reading *Nexus: A Brief History of Information Networks from the Stone Age to AI* by Noah Yuval Harari. [Register](#)

# Lifespan Faith Development

## Sunday Circle

Join us for stimulating conversation on a variety of topics. Meets the first Sunday of the month at 8:30am, October-May, in the library and on [zoom](#).

### January 5: Maps as Metaphor in Political Cartoons with Edd Sewell

Maps in political cartoons often serve as powerful metaphors to illustrate complex geopolitical issues, national identities, and territorial disputes. By distorting or exaggerating geographical features, cartoonists can highlight political tensions, critique policies, or convey messages about power dynamics and cultural perceptions. These visual metaphors make abstract political concepts more accessible and engaging for the audience.

### February 2: "Oh, the Humanities!" with Paul Quigley

If you listen to the critics, subjects like History, Philosophy, and English don't lead to good jobs; they're typically taught with a liberal brainwashing agenda; and they will soon be rendered obsolete by AI. We will discuss why studying the humanities is in fact more essential than ever amid technological revolution, political polarization, and climate crisis.

### March 2: Understanding Gender Identity and Pronouns with Rachel Craine

Understanding gender identity and pronouns is vital for fostering inclusive communities. We will explore various gender identities and the importance of using correct pronouns to affirm and support individuals.



## Family and Multigenerational Opportunities

### Parent Covenant Group—Meets monthly on a Friday from 5:30-7:30 p.m

Join other parents for socializing and guided discussion. Discussion topics are loosely based on the *Soul Matters* theme, but with emphasis on topics relevant to parents. This year, a light meal of child-friendly foods will be provided at 5:30. Meeting and childcare begin at 6pm. Childcare provided at no cost, but you must RSVP to [Rachel](#) so we can have the appropriate number of providers. [Please register your family here.](#)

#### Dates for Winter:

December 13

January 31

February 28

## The Buddy Project

The Buddy Project moves to February! Don't miss this wonderful opportunity to become buddies with a member of another generation! Registered children and adults will be paired and will exchange messages, ultimately meeting in a great Buddy Reveal at UUC. Register by **January 25** to participate, so don't delay! [Register here.](#)



## All Ages Monthly Fun and Game Nights

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

Winter Dates: Saturdays—Jan. 11, Feb. 1 and March 1. 5:30-8:30pm







*Support our local UUC artisans!*

We will be having our first annual Craft Fair on December 15 after the Sunday service. There will be 12 vendors selling their crafts featuring knitted scarves and hats, woodworking items, fiber arts, collage, paintings, quilts and other amazing items. These are perfect for holiday gifts or to treat yourself! Each vendor will contribute at least 10% of their proceeds to the UUC Playground Upgrade. Since most vendors don't have a way to process credit cards, we encourage you to bring cash or checks. - Denise Martin

*December 15*







## *Updates on Voting Rights*

By Sara Dalton

The UUC Voting Rights Team, in collaboration with Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy, led our congregation in our pledge to becoming a 100% voting congregation for the 2024 fall election. As part of our efforts to promote this goal, the Voting Rights team kept non-partisan voting materials available and visible in our building and also provided voter information via a series of announcements in UU News and Updates. Two of our members led a Sunday Circle discussion of *Tyranny of the Minority* which included discussion of electoral reform. Several members of our team were involved in voter information/registration events throughout our community.

Our congregation was well represented in other voting-related efforts as several congregants served as Officers of Election. Many members of this congregation participated in writing 3,700 non-partisan get out the vote postcards, an effort led jointly by the Voting Rights Team and Anti- Racism Team.

In 2025, when the Virginia General Assembly is in session, the Voting Rights Team will be following legislation on the state level and advocating for legislation that ensures and protects the right to vote for all citizens. One important piece of legislation that will be considered is a Virginia constitutional amendment which provides for a fundamental right to vote for all citizens who meet the state's voting requirements and additionally would automatically restore voting rights to felons upon release from incarceration.

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## Social Justice at UUC

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Since Virginia holds elections every year, the Voting Rights Team will be gearing up to provide voter information and promote voting for the fall 2025 election when we will be voting on Governor, Lt. Governor, Attorney General and all 100 seats in the House of Delegates as well as various local elections in some jurisdictions. We welcome all who would like to be a part of our efforts to promote voting.

### *Updates on Reproductive Justice*

The UUC Reproductive Justice Team, formed in January of 2023 , decided in the spring of 2024 to merge with the newly formed local non-partisan, grassroots reproductive justice group, **Our Bodies Our Choice**, which has since hosted several community events. The next community event, Moving to Action, will be held on December 8 at 2:30 at the Blacksburg Community Center. The focus will be on actions we can take to ensure reproductive justice for all. One of the efforts will be to promote passage of a Virginia constitutional amendment, which will be before the General Assembly in January, 2025, and which is the first step to enshrining into Virginia law a fundamental right to reproductive freedom. We invite all UUs who are interested to join us in our efforts for reproductive justice.

—Sara Dalton

*For more information and to join the Voting Rights team and/or Reproductive Justice efforts please contact Sara Dalton at [sarabdaltan@outlook.com](mailto:sarabdaltan@outlook.com)*





# Dancing through the Decades

## *3rd Annual UUC Dance Party* *Saturday, Jan. 25, 6 PM*

The UUC Board is excited to invite you to our 3rd Annual UUC dance party: Dancing Through the Decades. Join us on Saturday, January 25, 2025, at 6 PM for this family-friendly event.

Show your dance moves to the tunes from the 1950-2020s at the UUC. Wear your favorite outfit from your favorite decade! Or you are welcome to be a wallflower and watch!

This event is sponsored by the UUC Board; we will provide snacks, non-alcoholic drinks, and music. There is a suggested donation of \$10 per person or \$20 per household. Proceeds will support the UUC. —Laura Robinson, UUC Board President

- What: 3rd Annual Dancing Through the Decades
- When: Saturday, January 25,
- Time: 6 PM – 8 PM
- Where: UUC
- Questions? [board@uucnr.org](mailto:board@uucnr.org)
- Please RSVP so we can have snack headcount.
- If you purchased this already through the 2024 UUC Auction, then you're all set!
- For all others, please **[RSVP here.](#)**





## ***Rebecca White***

Rebecca is a Colorado girl who got a bit lost, ending up in Southwest Virginia 12 years ago and has grown to have a deep appreciation for these elder mountains. She has always had the wanderlust, working and living in France, Madagascar, Namibia and most recently New Zealand. Her daily life is enmeshed in maternal/child and reproductive health as she makes a living as a midwife. It has been a joy for her to see many of the babies caught in her practice thrive in this nourishing community. You can often find her bumbling about in her garden or on the trail with her husband, Philip, and their dog, Neko. After a decade of loitering in the congregation, she is thrilled to sign the book and make her membership official.



## ***Carolyn & Greg Kogan***

Carolyn, Greg, Lucia (7 yrs old) and Matthias (4 yrs old) relocated from Brooklyn to Blacksburg two years ago. Greg serves as a Professor of Practice in the Accounting Department at Virginia Tech, while Carolyn teaches Social Media Marketing and Personal Wellness for the Marketing Department.

The Kogans love impromptu dance parties at home, baking sweet things, scootering down modest hills, swimming all year long, and playing soccer as a family.

They came to the UUC in hopes of finding a community of like-minded individuals open to all faiths focused on respect. Since arriving last Spring, they have been volunteering on the Playground Committee, RE, and Finance Committee.

## Welcoming New Members

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### ***Paul Metz***

Paul Metz is retired after a long career with the Virginia Tech Libraries. He lives in Blacksburg with his wife, Nancy. They are the proud favorites of Blacksburg (Robert) and Portland, OR (Estella).



### ***Patrick (Pat) Miller***



Pat was raised in Southern California, where he met his since-departed wife of 55 years, Pamela. He is a landscape architect and received his degrees from Cal Poly, Cal Berkeley, and the University of Michigan. Pat came to Blacksburg from Canada in 1989 to serve as Head of the

Landscape Architecture Department at Virginia Tech and subsequently served as Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Outreach in the College of Architecture and Urban Studies. His area of scholarly expertise is landscape perception and assessment. His most recent and most exhilarating accomplishment was taking a dip in the Arctic Ocean with his two sons last summer. He spends his summers in what he calls God's country, also known as Montana. Pat has felt a strong connection with the people, values, and beliefs he has found at UUC and feels honored to be considered for membership.

### ***Jen and Scotty Scott***

Jen Pollard Scott has lived in Blacksburg off and on for 30 years and has visited UUC on occasion during that time. Durelle (Scotty) Scott moved here 15 years ago with his young children, Nola and Beatrice. Together they had Eliot and raised 3 beautiful kids! Nola and Beatrice are now adults, exploring the world from Burlington, VT and soon, Olympia, Washington. Eliot (11) participates in our middle school program.



Jen works at the VT Autism Clinic & Center for Autism Research and Scotty is a professor in Biological Systems Engineering. They are both passionate about being outdoors, spending time with family, live music, and dancing (clogging for Jen!). Eliot is loving middle school, Lacrosse, gaming, hanging out with friends and his sweet family.



## Welcoming New Members

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### ***Sean Sovine***

Sean Sovine grew up in Charleston, WV and found his way to Blacksburg for grad school. He liked it so well here that after moving away for a while he decided to move back. He studied math and for a living writes computer code. He enjoys reading, taking many walks, hanging out with his two cats, and tinkering with electronics. Sean became interested in Unitarian Universalism when he read the UU principles on the website of a local congregation in WV and decided to drop in.

### ***Lauren Oliver and Amy Aubrey***

Lauren and Amy have made the New River Valley their home. Lauren first moved to the area about five years ago for a position at Virginia Tech in Student Affairs. During the pandemic, Amy and Lauren met online and did distance until Amy was able to join Virginia Tech as well in Advancement. They were married last spring and have loved connecting with a community of like-minded people here at the UUC.



Now living in Christiansburg with their dog, Woody, they're grateful for the opportunity to build their family in this region. Lauren is originally from Minnesota, and Amy is from Johnson City, Tennessee. They enjoy travel, time with people they love, cooking, and adventures. They are excited to help the congregation where their gifts align with needs.

*Have you found your spiritual home in UUC?  
Want to become a member? Contact [Rev. Pam!](#)*





By Susan Baker

SUCCESS! The Put-It-To-Bed Workday, November 2, saw 27 energized UU's (see photo above) working together to get our outdoor sanctuary (5+ acres of grounds) ready for the winter.

It was an amazing crew of children, young adults, and the senior set who raked "a ton" of leaves and hauled them to the curbs.



The way-finder bricks on the meditation path got cleaned and refreshed with new paint. Slopes in the parking lot got weed-whacked, the labyrinth got cleaned up, the plastic landscape border in the memorial garden is getting replaced with a sturdier metal border, and other miscellaneous tasks were attended to: an amazing amount of work done by our congregants despite the last-minute cancellation of student volunteers. Thanks to all who helped on the workday and during the week prior to November 2 and to Amanda Morgan, the co-chair of the workday.

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## 'Round the Grounds

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### A SURPRISE, UPDATED BIRD HOUSE!

The bluebird box located in the crescent garden (on the uphill side of the church) has a gorgeous new look. Monte Hager, the builder of the original bird house, updated/rebuilt the bird house. It now has a new mounting, a hinged top for easy clean-out, a copper roof, and eye-catching paint with a two-dimensional chalice. Thank you, Monte, for the surprise.



### THE “VILLAGE” OF UNSUNG WORKERS ON THE UUC GROUNDS

The Grounds Ministry team members take seriously their responsibility to be care-takers of the UUC grounds/outdoor sanctuary. Team members Jim Flowers, Susan Baker, George Lally, Denise Martin, Amanda Morgan, Greg Evanylo, and Susie Fry would be thrilled to have YOU join the team! Contact [Jim Flowers](#) to be part of the planning, decision making, and hands-on work.



In addition to the Grounds Ministry team, there is a “village” of unsung workers who give of their time and talents to the improvement and maintenance of the grounds: Linda Pfeiffer, Ellen Rummel, and Nancy and Paul Metz – watering the potted plants all summer; Sharon Day did the deadheading of spent blossoms and anything else I asked of her.

Sally and Doug Pfeiffer – *monitoring and clean out of the 7 bluebird boxes on the grounds.*

Richard Reed – *caring for the 3 bee hives in the bee enclosure.*

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## 'Round the Grounds *continued from previous page*

\*Greg Evanylo – *improving the peacock meadow area, removing invasive species, and revising and replanting the pollinator/wildflower bed.*

\*Jane Hundley – *my co-worker and motivator doing grounds maintenance.*

\*Hub (Seneca) Haynes – *artistic rebuilding of the rock wall around the perimeter of the pond in the upper lawn.*

Bob Lineberry – *restoring and rebuilding the second of two 8' picnic tables*

\*Amanda Morgan – *organized the first-of-the month Saturday casual workdays; my motivator*

\*Josh Dugan –*kept the grass mowed and the shrubs trimmed along the driveway entrance*



\*Adam Salzman from Highland Tree Care *who supplied us with truck loads of free wood chips*

\*all those who offered encouragement and gratitude; donated tools and garden art (often anonymously); and our UUC neighbors who walk on the UUC grounds.





## 'Round the Grounds *continued from previous page*

## *The Grounds Ministry Team Needs YOU!*

We need someone to winterize our two beloved lawnmowers and get the blade sharpened on one of the two mowers.

Looking toward 2025, we need a volunteer to do weekly or bi-weekly mowing of the grass on each side of the driveway entrance and to keep the driveway hedged trimmed. This could be shared by several individuals.

Cleaning out your garage? We will gladly accept hand garden tools, wheelbarrows, garden and leaf rakes, plastic lawn chairs, and garden art.

The greatest need is for **workers to periodically assist with grounds maintenance**. You don't have to be a gardener to do this. We will do the mentoring. Get moving outdoors to keep healthy and get a mental/emotional lift! Cheers to Mother Nature! Heaven is in the dirt!

- Susan Baker



### *It's time for the "Hearts on Fire" UUC Chili Cook-off*

Bring the whole family to UUC on **Saturday, February 22 at 6 PM** for a fun night of fellowship and yummy heart-warming chilis. Enter your favorite chili (vegetarian or meat; hot, mild or in between) and/or cornbread for all to share, and maybe you'll be the lucky winner: and go home with a prize! Your help is needed — simply go to our Perfect [Potluck Webpage](#) and enter what you will bring. Non-alcoholic beverages provided. This is an alcohol-free event.



A background image showing several blue paper cutouts of people holding hands in a circle, with one green paper cutout in the center. The text "ONGOING GATHERINGS" is overlaid in white.

# 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.

# ONGOING GATHERINGS

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

**UUYAs** | If you're between the ages of 18 and 25, the UUYAs (Unitarian Universalist Young Adults) meet every Tuesday in Elarth Hall from 7-9 PM to play games, engage with the community, and support our congregation. For more information, contact [uuya@uucnrv.org](mailto: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** | 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](#).

## INCLEMENT WEATHER PLAN



*When Jack Frost gets up to no good? Please note...*

We will make a determination about Sunday morning services on Saturday evenings or early Sunday mornings, depending on the conditions of the roads and our parking lot. We will always err on the side of safety for our congregants and volunteers, and we encourage people to stay home if they don't feel safe on the roads. Fortunately, unless power or internet are affected by the weather, we can still hold services on Zoom.

If a decision is made for the service to be held, the grounds will be cleared as much as possible. ***If a decision is made to cancel the service***, we will get the message out! Here are some of our methods: changing the outgoing message on the church phone; notifying television station WSLs; sending an email to our community; posting a notice of cancellation on the home page of our website.

### *Snow or Ice?*

Check our website.



Check your email.



Watch WSLs.

Call the church for auto message.