



# What's with UUS

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalists of Sterling  
A Welcoming Congregation  
Sterling, Virginia



## Minister's Message



### Faith, a Conversation

Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael

One of our congregation's members, Michael Berger, is known to say that "I do not choose my beliefs; only over time do I notice that I have them." His statement inevitably leads to an excellent conversation on freedom, choice, and fate, one that will likely invite participants to question suppositions that they once held firm. In the end even if he doesn't sway any minds, he gives them just provocation to doubt their past certainties. His rational manner reminds me of the ancient thinker Socrates whose philosophical system hinged on the fact that truth, if it is to be found, must wrestle first with doubt.

I feel that we often engage such a process whenever we speak about "faith." One simple utterance and we are plunged into a longstanding conversation we didn't create, nor will we ever finish. Here is a bit of the conversation I have known:

Dictionary: Faith is a belief in, devotion to, or trust in somebody or something, especially without logical proof.

Rev. Anya: I agree in part but don't see faith as something I hold without logical proof. I have faith in a spirit of life that connects all life – a force per se that runs through all things. I sense this and I don't believe the sensations are illogical. I might even propose they were rational – just rational on a different level than mathematics.

Oscar Wilde (playwright): "Skepticism  
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## President's Message



### Our Rite of Spring

Dave Miller

April showers are giving way to May flowers – and to the time of year when we at UUS hold our annual congregational meeting. For those of you who are newcomers, the annual congregational meeting is when members of UUS exercise their voice in the plans, operations, and future direction of the church. This year's meeting will be held at 12:00 noon on Sunday, May 17, 2009.

At this meeting, members will hear reports on the current state of the church, vote for next year's leaders, and ratify the fiscal budget for the upcoming church year. While friends and visitors are welcome to attend the meeting and participate in any discussions during the meeting, only members, those who have signed the membership book, are allowed to cast a vote.

For those of you who are thinking about joining UUS, now would be a great time to take that step. My wife, Susan, and I became members of UUS when we did for that reason. We had been attending for a while, the annual meeting was coming up, and we knew we wanted to participate. We are happy we did so. As the American Express ads used to say, "Membership has its privileges." Here at UUS, the privilege is having a vote in the choices that direct the future of our beloved community.

As is usually the case, privileges also entail obligations. At UUS, the obligation is to participate. I urge all members to participate in the process by

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## Worship Calendar

Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael

May 3rd "The Life that is Larger than Ourselves" Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael invites us to encounter this month's liturgical them – Faith. What does it mean to have faith? We will begin with a hymn sing at 10:20 and will host an inquirer's class at noon. In addition a Volunteer Fest will abound during the hospitality hour!

May 10th "Flower Communion" In this annual celebration led by Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael we gather to share in the blessing of community as we celebrate both our unity and diversity. This is an all-ages service, based on a ritual developed by the renowned Czech Unitarian minister Norbert Chapek. A children's choir will perform and we will have the opportunity to honor our mothers. NOTE: Everyone is strongly encouraged to bring one flower.

May 17th "How did we get here? – Fate Freedom and Membership" Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael and the membership community will provide this service of celebration and recognition. We will ask if it is fate or freedom that determines which organizations we choose to support, and we will recognize our new members as well as our charter members so we may celebrate their commitments to UUS.

May 24th "Whose Am I?" Reverend Scott Sammler-Michael, guest minister. At last year's Service of the Living Tradition, Reverend Victoria Safford from White Bear, Minnesota suggested the ancient question "Who Am I?" becomes a deeper reflection – "Whose Am I?" To whom or what do I grant my allegiance? What do I find of Ultimate importance? To what am I faithful? Join us as we explore these issues of an abiding faith. Reverend Scott Sammler-

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*(Minister, continued from page 1)*

is the beginning of faith.”

Rev. Anya: Oscar, you are adept with words and I treasure your plays, but here I think you trifle with these words and their meanings. Skepticism is not the beginning of anything but more skepticism. It is a closed loop – doubt everything. Ok, what’s next – certainly not Faith?

William James (philosopher): “Faith means belief in something concerning which doubt is theoretically possible”

Rev. Anya: William your pragmatism is clean, crisp, and confident, and I can’t argue with you, but I am not all that interested either.

Friedrich Nietzsche (philosopher): “‘Faith’ means not wanting to know what is true”

Rev. Anya: Friedrich, unlike James, you are ever ready to put your foot in your mouth. And while your critique is biting, I wholly disagree. The kind of faith you are talking about is blind faith. The kind I am interested in walks hand in hand with truth – it is the kind of faith that Martin Luther King, and Gandhi had – the kind I hope I am building.

Oswald Chambers (author): “Faith is deliberate confidence in the character of God whose ways you may not understand at the time.”

Rev. Anya: Oswald, you enter into our conversation carrying the flag of one faith. Would you be willing to substitute “Spirit of Life” or the “divine wholeness of life” for your word God? I do use the word God, and I don’t see anything inherently wrong with that choice, but I wonder if faith is a larger word than you presume.

Henry David Thoreau (Transcendental Naturalist): “The smallest seed of faith is better than the largest fruit of happiness.”

Rev. Anya: My dear Thoreau, I have read and enjoyed reading your many works on nature and life. They have brought me so much happiness that I wonder why you chose to contrast faith and happiness? I am more interested in seeing how they partner in this dance of life – something they must have done for you, from time to time.

## Roving Reporter

**Susan Rose**

Spring has arrived in all its glory, which brings me to ask, what is your favorite season and why?

Julia (8) Summer—it’s hot and it’s fun to play outdoors!

Holly (11) I like spring because it’s not too hot like summer and not too cold like winter, it’s my birthday season, and the flowers come out!

Logan (6) Winter because it snows!

Libby(7) Spring ‘cuz that’s my birthday season and there’s cherry blossoms!

Ben (10) Spring ‘cuz it’s not too cold and it’s a good time of the year to go to the park!

Elin (6) Summer because I get to go to the pool!

Fordon (7) Winter ‘cuz it’s my birthday season!

Maddie (8) Spring because I see the cherry tree in my front yard bloom!

Makayla (8) I like all the seasons but I’ll say fall because there’s all the colorful leaves and school starts!

St. Thomas Aquinas (Catholic Theologian): “To one who has faith, no explanation is necessary. To one without faith, no explanation is possible.”

Rev. Anya: Aquinas, my sparring partner, we disagree on so much – but this... this is a pure gem. I will savor it. Maybe this is why the conversation goes on and on. Maybe we are trying to explain something that is impossible to explain. And isn’t it so odd that you who uttered these words were so deeply engaged in providing Catholic dogma with a philosophical grounding. Would you say that Dogma can be explained but faith in it cannot. What then is Dogma? This I like ... this leads to a new conversation ... but one for another day.

*(President continued from page 1)*

attending the annual meeting if at all possible or by casting an absentee ballot. This church is yours! It needs your say!

*(Worship Calendar continued from page 1)*

Michael, Senior Minister, Accotink UU Church swaps pulpits with Rev. Anya.

May 31st "Our Great Work" Terry Ellen, guest minister. For the elders among us, it was stopping Hitler. For all of us now it is saving the planet. So says Thomas Berry, and I think he's right. Our response, if joined with what Van Jones and others are calling environmental justice, can, even in these dire economic and environmental times, lead to a future that is humane, exciting, promising, and liberating.

Terry Ellen is Consulting Minister in Cumberland and Executive Director of UUs for Social Justice of the Baltimore, Washington, Northern Virginia Area. He is slowly learning gardening, has realized learning Arabic is more than he can handle, is preparing to teach adults about the Sufis, and is sustained by his family, quirky as they are.



## Lifespan RE Opportunities

Linda Weaver

There are still many opportunities to serve your congregation and contribute to the ministry of lifespan religious exploration and enrichment. Help build the multi-age community at UUS and ensure a meaningful RE program for the children. These are a few of the possibilities:

**Lifespan Faith Development Committee Member:** The committee meets once a month to plan and implement the work necessary to make the congregation's vision for religious exploration and enrichment a reality. Anyone interested in Lifespan RE at UUS is welcome. Especially needed are people with skills in organization, group facilitation, writing, creating and maintaining web pages, or planning events, and people who enjoy interacting with and contacting other people.

**Children's RE Leaders for 2009-10:** Lead a class at least once a month in September through June. Lesson plans are provided and the DRE is available if you have questions, need help getting resources, or would like additional ideas. Children benefit from consistency, so consider leading more than once a month!

**Children's RE Assistants for 2009-10:** Assist in a class once a month in September through June or a few Sundays throughout the year. You will help with set up and clean up before and after the class and help supervise children during the class. Simply being present during the class is the most crucial part of this job.

**Nursery Assistants:** Help watch children during the service once a month.

**Other opportunities** include substituting in children's RE or the nursery, helping arrange child care for special events, planning or helping with children's activities during special events, driving on field trips, or sharing your knowledge about or interest in a religion, culture, or holiday.

## Together We Play: Summer RE

Linda Weaver

It may sound like all fun and games, but there may be few skills more important than learning to "play well with others." This year's summer program, Together We Play, is adapted from *In Our Hands: A Peace and Social Justice Program* published by the Unitarian Universalist Association. It encourages peace and justice within each individual, in relationships with others, and in relationship with the earth.

During the summer we offer one class for children in kindergarten through 6th grade. The nursery will be available for younger children. Older children and youth may attend the services or help in RE or the nursery.

Each Sunday one leader, one assistant, and one nursery helper are needed. We are also looking for one additional person each Sunday to be available to help in the nursery or RE class. Leaders will receive a lesson plan with a suggested story, one or two discussion questions, a game and a craft idea. Assistants and nursery helpers merely show up and help watch the children. Take a look at the summer schedule and let Linda Weaver know how and when you would like to help. Contact her at [re-director@uusterling.org](mailto:re-director@uusterling.org) to sign up to help or to find out more about the program.



To find out more about the RE program at UUS and the volunteer opportunities in RE, contact Linda Weaver at [re-director@uusterling.org](mailto:re-director@uusterling.org).

## Religious Exploration Schedule

Linda Weaver

### Kindergarten-4th Grade:

May 3 – Needing and Helping Others

May 10 – No RE – Intergenerational Service

May 17 – Thinking for Ourselves

May 24 – Celebration

May 31 – RE Rehearsal

June 7 – No RE – Intergenerational RE Service

June 14 – Trail Clean-Up

### 5th-8th Grade:

May 3 – Do No Harm

May 10 – No RE – Intergenerational Service

May 17 – What Do We Have Faith In?

May 24 – Movin' On

May 31 – RE Rehearsal

June 7 – No RE – Intergenerational RE Service

June 14 – Trail Clean-Up

### Summer RE:

June 21 – What is Peace?

June 28 – What is Fair?

July 5 – Valuing Myself and Others

July 12 – Celebrating Our Differences

July 19 – Listening

July 26 – Feelings

Aug. 2 – Caring for Others

Aug. 9 – Resolving Conflict

Aug. 16 – Forgiveness

Aug. 23 – Play Creatively

Aug. 30- Caring for the Earth

Sept. 6 – What Can I Do?

To find the names of the leaders and assistants for each session, go to the calendar at <http://www.uusterling.org/>. Find the correct month, and then click on the RE class session.

# Anti-Racism/ Multicultural Online Class - Transforming Our Whiteness

Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael

May 4 – June 5

White people don't experience the racial oppression that people of color experience. Whiteness is the norm in our society. As a result it is hard for those of us who are white to see our own white power and privilege.

In this workshop we will identify what whiteness is, clarify the ways it operates on our lives, and explore ways of transforming whiteness into a force for justice.

Whiteness is a social construct with a 500-year history. We will explore how whiteness took shape in colonial times and how it has changed over time. We will be particularly interested in the racialization of European immigrants into whiteness. We will discuss being a good ally to People of Color, working to end racism in white controlled institutions, and nurturing a positive white racial identity in our children. This course will be taught by the Rev. Melissa Carvill-Ziemer and the Rev. Bill Gardiner. They serve as co-chairs of the Unitarian Universalist Allies for Racial Equity Education Committee and lead transforming whiteness workshops for congregations and community organizations.

More information can be found at <http://www.uurgl.com/learn/>



# Love and Forgiveness Panel Discussion

Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael

Can we have love but not forgiveness, or true forgiveness without love?

Join the Loudoun County Public Library for an Interfaith Panel Discussion with members of Loudoun Interfaith BRIDGES.

Sunday, May 3 • 4:00 pm • Purcellville Library

Sunday, May 17 • 2:04:00 pm • Cascades Library

Religious leaders will discuss the theme of love and forgiveness within their particular faith. Question and answer sessions will follow. Participants will include:

Father Art Johnson, Christ the Redeemer Catholic Church; Rev. Dr. David Milam, St. Andrew Presbyterian Church; Rabbi Michael Ragozin, Congregation Sha'are Shalom; Sr. Farhanahz Ellis, All Dulles Area Muslim Society; Sat Kartar Singh Khalsa, Raj Khalsa Gurdwara (Sikh Temple); Pastor Don Prange and David Weintraub, St. James United Church of Christ; Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael, Unitarian Universalists of Sterling; Ray Daffner, Beth Chaverim Reform Congregation; Sheila Kryston, Goose Creek Friends Meeting (Quaker)

For more information call 703.777.0368 or visit: [library.loudoun.gov](http://library.loudoun.gov).

# UUS Rehabs Home in Bluemont

On April 25, a work crew of UUS volunteers spent the day renovating a home in the idyllic village of Bluemont in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. National Rebuilding Day is an annual event organized by Rebuilding Together (formerly Christmas in April) where volunteers across the country work in teams to rehabilitate the homes of low-income and elderly homeowners in their community.

The day's work involved repairing an old bathroom with new drywall, paint and a tub surround, and repairing and painting a porch ceiling. Spock, the resident Lab/Australian Shepherd mix provided entertainment and encouragement.

It was a great opportunity to spend a day in a beautiful setting, learn a few "handyman" tricks, and have fun while addressing a real need in a very tangible way. It provided a way to express our collective concern for social justice and to focus our individual energy outward to the larger community.

Below, left: Things are looking up for Ken!

Below, the crew: Chris, Belinda, Linda, Ken, & Bob.



# Money, Values and Impact: A Conference on Ethical Investing for UU Congregations

Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael

May 9, 2009

All Souls Church, Unitarian: 1500 Harvard St., NW, Washington, D.C., 20009

Join nationally prominent UU leaders and socially responsible investing experts to explore how your congregation can do well by doing good. Learn about opportunities to help build a more “green” and just economy while making sound financial moves in difficult times. Explore investment vehicles, exemplary practices and policies, and strategy options. Equip yourself with the knowledge and resources needed to align your congregation’s financial management practices with Unitarian Universalist social and environmental justice principles.

Confirmed speakers include: Tom Bird, Sr. V.P., Smith Barney; Tim Brennan, Treasurer, Unitarian Universalist Association; Lenard Cohen, Principal, CF Services Group, Inc.; Donna Katzin, Executive Director, Shared Interest; Peter Kenney, V.P., Global Wealth Management, Merrill Lynch; Jerry Konohia, President and CEO, OpenDoor Housing Fund; Stephanie Leighton, Director of Equity Research and Sr. Portfolio Manager, Trillium Assets ... and many more.

Registration fee: \$25 – individual

Register on line at [www.jpduua.org](http://www.jpduua.org)

# UUS Needs YOU

Linda Weaver

To build a strong community and create the deeply meaningful religious education program for which families search, UUS needs YOU! For those who have no children in the program, helping in RE is a great way to get to know the families and to find out more about Unitarian Universalism. The focus next year will be on world religions and cultures, so working in RE will also give you the opportunity to develop a better understanding of our global community. The additional rewards are numerous. You will receive smiles, witness the creativity and wisdom of the amazing kids at UUS, and experience the wonder and awe of a child.

We expect those without children to volunteer in RE and we greatly appreciate this commitment to UUS and the future. However, we also realize that the richly significant program we would like can only be offered if parents volunteer to work with the children in RE at least once a month. The size and age range of the classes next year will be determined by the number and ages of children registered and the number of adults who sign up to lead and assist in classes. So make sure to sign up soon to help in the 2009-2010 church year.

# General Assembly

Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael

General Assembly (GA) is the annual meeting of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations. General Assemblies make overall policy for carrying out the purposes of the Association and direct and control its affairs. They are also a wonderful way to experience this larger movement of which we are a part – with worship, social justice activities, social gatherings, programming for all ages, and workshops galore! If you want to go, or simply learn more go to: <http://www.uua.org/events/generalassembly/>

## Mosaic Harmony Spring Concert

Judy Gruner

Another wonderful Mosaic Harmony concert is in your future! You have two choices: May 16th at 7 PM at River Road UU or Sunday May 17th at 4 PM at UUCF. Please consult our web site at [www.mosaicarmony.org](http://www.mosaicarmony.org) for purchasing tickets on line or I will be happy to get them for you. We have some new songs to share plus several small ensembles will be performing. Your support enables us to continue our charitable good works through song throughout the upcoming year.



# Board Meeting Highlights

April 1, 2009 (No foolin'!)

## Attendees:

President: Dave Miller

VP: Bonnie Lepoff

Secretary: (Jeff Chandler)

Co-Treasurers: Paul Roche and (Alyssa Lum)

At-Large: Ken Ward, Linda Reeder, Belinda Bullock, (Scott Findley)

Minister: Rev. Anya

DRE: Linda Weaver

Former Pres: (Bryan George)

Treasurer's Report: Our cash flow is in good shape.

Stewardship campaign status: We are below our goal with 19 pledge units still outstanding. We believe we will make our goal.

## Old Business:

Strategic Planning Committee: The group is on track for presenting a draft report at the annual meeting on May 17. Rev Anya reports they are creatively discussing the issues raised in the Cottage Conversations.

New Space: Dave reported that there is no official vacate date for the space next door, but it will be after May. We have received an estimated rent amount from Tim; it is somewhat higher than we are budgeting for. We need to meet with Tim in the next couple of weeks to begin negotiating. Karen Saifer-Ward and Gus Douguilh have agreed to be our negotiating team. The board discussed the guidelines we will give them related to cost and length of lease and agreed that a three year lease is preferable but a four year lease will be considered depending on the terms. The negotiating team will bring the final offer to the board for approval.

Girls' Choir space rental. The board agreed to charge 10 percent of the fees collected for both the summer camp and Monday's beginning in the fall. The agreement will contain a clause that lets us preempt their use if we need the space which is expected to be a rare occurrence.

Annual Meeting: Reports need to be submitted to Jeff by mid-month. The

treasurer's report should emphasize our spending rate with an estimate for the rest of the year. Reports should be submitted by the President, Vice President, Treasurer, Director of Religious Education, and the minister. At-large members may submit reports for their committees.

## New Business:

Board Transition meeting: The date had been set for June 13, but that conflicts with the Women's Retreat which is scheduled for that weekend. The new date for the transition is the July board meeting, which is July 1. Rev Anya let us know she will not be at this meeting. The retreat will be Saturday, July 18.

Volunteer Fest: This display of committee activity will be held on two Sundays: April 19 and May 3. The Finance Committee and the Board will also be represented. The board won't be recruiting as much as sharing what we do. But we can recruit for a facilities committee. Paul will coordinate for the finance committee. Dave will be there on the 19th for the board and Bonnie will be there on the 3rd.

Requests for assistance procedures: Rev Anya has a discretionary fund which she can use to help people in need but she would prefer that we have a policy to provide a framework. Linda Reeder will work with Rev Anya to draft a policy. The board decided that 5th Sunday collections will supplement Rev Anya's discretionary fund.

JPD Leadership Development. The JPD is offering grants of up to \$2000 for leadership training. We see this as a way to encourage and assist new members in attending leadership training workshops. Paul and Belinda will review the information and draft a proposal.

## Calendar Review:

April 25th is Rebuilding Together day. We have been given a house in Bluemont. The bathroom walls need repair and the roof of a connected shed is leaking. Ken is leading the effort with help from Linda and Belinda. The current level of UUS participation is low. Linda will make a big signup sheet and make an announcement next Sunday.

May 17th is Charter Day, Membership

Sunday, and our Annual Meeting.

## Cards:

A congratulations card to Scott Sammler -Michael on his installation.

A thank you card to Susan Miller for her work setting up the ESL classes.

And a thank you to Andy from Loudoun Cares who sang Appalachian ballads at our service last Sunday.

Readings and snacks next month: Linda Reeder

## Board Hosts:

April 19 – Dave

April 26 – Jeff

May 3 – Linda

May 10 – Bonnie

May 17 – Dave



# May 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2 12:30 UU Beginnings
3 10:30 Worship Service 11:30 Volunteer Fest 12 Inquirer's Class 1 Loudoun Quilt of Faith Discussion	4	5 12 Chandler Covenant Group	6 7 Board of Trustees Meeting	7 7 Six Voices, Six Faiths 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	8	9 6 am—5 pm AAFCJ 12 New to UU
10 10:30 Worship Service	11 7 Rose Covenant Group	12 7 Berger Covenant Group	13	14 7 Six Voices, Six Faiths 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	15	16 10 Living By Heart
17 10:30 Worship Service 12 Annual Meeting	18 7 Book Club for UUS	19 6:30 Old Sterling Gable HOA Meeting	20 7 The Spirituality of Food	21 7 Six Voices, Six Faiths 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	22	23
24 10:30 Worship Service	25	26	27	28. 7 Six Voices, Six Faiths 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	29	30
31 10:30 Worship Service	<b>Please visit <a href="http://uusterling.org">http://uusterling.org</a> for updated calendar</b>					



## Unitarian Universalists of Sterling

PO Box 1632  
Sterling, VA 20167  
(703) 406-3068  
<http://uusterling.org>

22135 Davis Drive  
Suite 104  
Sterling, VA 20164

Office hours are:  
Monday, Wednesday, & Thursday  
10:00 AM—4:30 PM



### ***Your Church Leadership***

**Minister:** Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael

**Director of Religious Exploration:** Linda Weaver; **Music Director:** Kristina Adams

**Board of Trustees:** *President* - Dave Miller; *Vice President* - Bonnie Lepoff; *Secretary* - Jeff Chandler;  
*Co-Treasurers* - Alyssa Lum and Paul Roche; *At-large* - Scott Findley, Ken Ward, Linda Reeder, Belinda Bullock

### ***UUS Mission Covenant Statement***

The Unitarian Universalists of Sterling offer a place where reason and spirituality converge. We welcome members of the community who are seeking such a religious home.

Our mission is to make the community a better place to live by promoting a variety of religious expressions, working toward social justice, and fostering diversity. In order to carry out this mission, we covenant to listen to each other, encourage the exchange of creative thought, and respect our differences.

### ***UUS Sunday Services 10:30 AM***

**Unitarian Universalists of Sterling** meets at the Sterling Oaks Commerce Center Sterling, a handicapped-accessible 24-7 facility, located on 22135 Davis Drive near Route 28 and Church Road in Sterling, Virginia. Child care and children's religious education are both provided during worship services. Dress is casual. Children are encouraged to wear play clothes.

From Northbound Route 28: Take Route 28 North exit from the Dulles Toll Road. Turn right at Church Road. Turn right on Davis Drive. Go about one block and turn right into the parking lot.

From Southbound Route 28: Take Route 28 south from Route 7. Head east on Church Road. Turn right on Davis Drive. Go about one block and turn right into the parking lot.

From Westbound Route 7: Turn left at Sterling Boulevard. Turn right at Church Road. Go three miles. Turn left on Davis Drive. Go about one block and turn right into the parking lot.

### ***What's with UUS***

**Communications Committee Chair:** Susan Miller

**Editor:** Bob Brown

**Media Relations:** Terry Dick

**Production:** Jeff Chandler, Susan Miller

**Board Liaison:** Jeff Chandler

To submit material for publication, send by email to [newsletter@uusterling.org](mailto:newsletter@uusterling.org)

#### **Submission Deadlines**

5/22 for June  
6/19 for July/August  
8/21 for September  
9/18 for October