

## Journey

***And the truth is that as a man's real power grows and his knowledge widens, ever the way he can follow grows narrower: until at last he chooses nothing, but does only and wholly what he must do.***

—The Summoner in Ursula K. Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2 President's Message
- 2 Religious Education
- 3 Upcoming Classes
- 4 General News
- 5 A Month of Spiritual Practice
- 6 Sacred Story for All Ages
- 7 Calendar

**Ingathering Service:  
Water Communion  
Sept. 8th**

See page 7.

[www.uusterling.org](http://www.uusterling.org)

22135 Davis Drive  
Sterling, VA 20167

(703) 406-3068

Mail: P.O. Box 1632  
Sterling, VA 20167

Have you ever watched an ant navigate a craggy driveway? From above, you can predict the journey's pitfalls. You know that the oil slick will inhibit his momentum and that the deep crack will twist him in a new direction. Retrospect gives us the same "god's eye" view with respect to our own lives and diverse journeys, but when we are in the middle—the thick of it—it's nearly impossible for us to know more than the ant. Perhaps grief looms like an oil slick or illness like a giant crack. We will be slowed, turned, and impeded long before we reach the end, and we will, over and anon, choose new ends for our journeys.

There are times when we will seek practical ends—new jobs, greater security. There are times when we will seek spiritual ends—a greater sense of peace, a closer relationship with ultimacy (whether we call that ultimacy God, the Universe, or something else). And there are times when we will seek moral ends—a more virtuous grounding in a more ethical life.

It is the moral life that one of writer Ursula K. Le Guin's characters explains with the following: "And the truth is that as a man's real power grows and his knowledge widens, ever the way he can follow grows narrower; until at last he chooses nothing, but does only and wholly what he must do...."

I say that as Unitarian Universalists, we do not choose willy nilly what we believe but that we believe what we must—what our conscience and experience press us to believe. Le Guin says that

at the end of the moral journey, choice dissolves and what we must do, solely and resolutely, calls us on.

There are many times when I would prefer less practical choice. It is easy to overload on choice from surfing the overwhelming amount of information on the world wide web to selecting my breakfast from a thirty foot cereal aisle. A narrowing of the way we follow both practically and morally may feel inhibiting at first, but I ask us to remember the ant. The ant does not have an innate knowing that will release him from the pitfalls of his journey; neither do we, but we can develop a knowing that will make our choices along our way bow to our moral compass.

This doesn't work for cereal, but it can work for decisions of right and wrong. Through our lives we can habituate virtue—growing our moral sense. We see a friend mocked and we reach out to him. Later we see a stranger mocked and we are compelled to reach out to her. Still later we sense that our culture is mocking a whole group of people and we know we must stand up for their peace. Our moral calling grows, and in time we are delivered of the

choices that no longer plague us and we can do simply what we must.

Our theme in September is journey. We will explore in worship both moral and spiritual aspects. Join us as we deepen our considerations of the choices we make, the ends we seek, and the opportunities we meet along our way.

### MINISTER'S MESSAGE

#### *Moral Deliverance: Doing What We Must*



Rev. Anya  
Sammler-Michael

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### *Journey: It's All About the Travel*



Bob Brown,  
Board President

Welcome to the start of our new church year. Please join us as we kick off the new year on September 8th at our intergenerational ingathering service, the Water Communion.

My first thought when seeing the word *journey* upon sitting down to write this column was the 70s/80s band named Journey. Curiosity hit me: what inspired the group to come up with the band name? The

Wikipedia entry on the band reads, "After an unsuccessful radio contest to name the group, a roadie suggested the name Journey." I did not find this inspirational.

Anyway, I digress. A journey is getting from point A to point B. A person's life is a journey, physically living from birth to death on this rock we call Earth, and in between, possibly after, we have many journeys. Between life and death some may sense an urgency to get from point A to point B, but I do not believe most people are in a hurry to reach the latter (death).

This leads me to think the journey is important, not the

destination. How do we treat others? (Judgement by externals, or by intrinsic worth?) What is important? (Possessions that we think will make us happy but only distract us, or focusing on life?)

Personally, I believe we are going to get the most of our journey through love, which needs empathy and which leads to understanding. Viktor Frankl, in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*, wrote:

For the first time in my life I saw the truth as it is set into song by so many poets, proclaimed as the final wisdom by so many thinkers. The truth—that Love is the ultimate and highest goal to which man can aspire. Then I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart: The salvation of man is through love and in love.

One may think about the future, but we are right here and now, able to experience the present life and not hold on to things that can make us depressed. At the end of this journey, if your footsteps were truly important, you will have happiness. And that, I believe, is the ultimate goal of the journey.

And a final note, one that is inscribed on the pendant around my best friend's neck, "There are no shortcuts anywhere worth going." Our journey is worth going on!

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

### *Marking Our Journeys: Finding Meaning, Connection, and Strength*



Linda Weaver,  
Director of Religious  
Education

We create meaning in our journey through life and strengthen our relationships by marking big events, such as births, first birthdays, the first day of school, special holidays, weddings or commitment ceremonies, retirement, and anniversaries. One of the big events every adult has experienced is the transition from childhood to adulthood. Some mark this transition with a bar or bat mitvah

or confirmation. At UUCS, we offer a Coming of Age program for seventh, eighth, and ninth graders every three

years. This program helps young teens discover their own strength and identify the support that exists in their families, church, and community. It also recognizes and encourages their ability to think about their own values, beliefs, and spirituality at a deeper level.

This year, seventh, eighth, and ninth graders are invited to attend field trips and other outside activities in addition to Sunday morning meetings with their peers. Those who complete the requirements for the Coming of Age program, including a social justice project and meetings with Rev. Anya, will celebrate with a Coming of Age ceremony in May. The group will take part in community building activities to create positive peer relationships. They will learn about Unitarian Universalism and other religions, developing a foundation for thinking about their own beliefs and understanding their neighbors. They will get to know leaders in the congregation who can serve as mentors as they

*RE Message, continued on page 4*

## UPCOMING CLASSES

### Youth Group (High School Age)

High School age youth participate in their own faith development in an active and generative manner. Their advisors (Howie Snowdon (Lead), Rachel Roman, Albert Puccio, and Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael) act as mentors and facilitators, but leadership is collaborative. A highlight of a usual youth group year is planning and leading a worship service. Creativity, deep sharing, and spirituality are key to the experience.

**Dates:** September 22 (orientation lunch for youth and parents) and most second and fourth Sundays from October through May: 10/13, 10/27, 11/10, 12/8, 12/20, 1/12, 1/26, 2/9, 2/23, 3/9, 3/23 (extended session for planning the youth service), 4/27, and 5/18. This year's youth-led worship service will be held on April 6.

**Time:** Noon

**Location:** Youth Room

To reserve your teen's place, fill out a registration form for each child at <http://uusterling.org/wordpress/learn/childrens-religious-education/childrens-re-registration/>

### Building Your Own Theology

Based on the assumption that everyone is their own theologian, this classic UU adult education program invites you to develop your own personal credos or statements of belief. This class is especially relevant for newcomers to Unitarian Universalism or individuals experiencing a transition from one stage of life to another. Sessions are highly participatory. Some voluntary homework is assigned.

**Dates:** Mondays 10/7, 10/21, 10/28, 11/4, 11/25, 12/9, 12/16

**Time:** 6:45–8:30 pm

**Location:** Church Memorial Hospitality Room

**Leader:** Rev. Anya

**Requested donation:** \$20

To reserve your place, fill out a registration form at <http://uusterling.org/wordpress/learn/adult-religious-education/adult-re-registration/>

### Practicing Spirituality Through Writing and Reflection

This course is about transformation through writing. It is based on a group process that facilitates the re-experiencing of the past not only as it happened but also as something that can be altered. It allows you to come to understand the past differently through the process of writing. The class includes four sessions that are structured to evoke significant memories from childhood and adolescence as well as to reflect on meaningful relationships and events that have contributed to your spiritual development. The second half of the class is devoted to writing your spiritual autobiography and reading it to members of the group. Reading to a group of sympathetic listeners yields further integration and understanding. The class will draw on material from Dan Wakefield's book, the *Story of Your Life—Writing a Spiritual Autobiography*.

**Dates:** Tuesdays 9/24, 10/1, 10/8, 10/15, 10/22, 10/29, 11/5, 11/12, 11/19

**Time:** 6:00–7:30 pm

**Location:** Darwin Mezzanine

**Leaders:** Hank Taylor and Denise Dittmar

**Requested Donation:** \$20

To reserve your place, fill out a registration form at <http://uusterling.org/wordpress/learn/adult-religious-education/adult-re-registration/>

*Upcoming Classes, continued on page 4*

*Upcoming Classes, continued from page 3*

## Immigration as a Moral Issue

This curriculum was created to help UU congregations and individuals engage the issue of immigration and is intended to give a broad overview to this complex issue. Our sessions will invite in-depth study and will welcome a variety of viewpoints.

**Dates:** Second Thursdays

Session I: 10/10 Understanding the Causes of Migration

Session II: 11/14 History of Immigration in the U.S.

Session III: 12/12 Economics of (Im)migration

Session IV: 1/9 Security, Enforcement, and Human Rights

Session V: 2/13 Who Benefits From a Broken System?

Session VI: 3/13 Seeking Solutions

**Time:** 6:30–8:30 pm

**Location:** Darwin Mezzanine

**Leaders:** The Immigration Task Force (facilitated by Rev. Anya)

**Requested Donation:** \$20

To reserve your place, fill out a registration form at <http://uusterling.org/wordpress/learn/adult-religious-education/adult-re-registration/>

## Children's Choir: An Opportunity in Two Sessions

Our celebrated music director, Kris Adams, is glad to work with all ages. If your children like the idea of making music and being involved in worship and are between ages 4 and 18, they are welcome.

**Session One** will perform on Sunday, October 6; practices will be at 11:30 am on September 8, 22, and 29.

**Session Two** will perform on Sunday, December 22; practices will be at 11:30 am on November 10, December 1, and December 15.

**Requested donation** (per session): \$10/child or \$20/family.

To reserve your child or youth's place, connect with our Music Director, Kris Adams, at [music-director@uusterling.org](mailto:music-director@uusterling.org)

*RE Message, continued from page 2*

continue to grow at UUCS. The teens will build their leadership skills by engaging in a social justice project and other activities. They will explore spiritual practices that can help them deal with stress and find meaning in their lives. Each participant will choose a personal challenge. This may be taking part in an outdoor activity with the group or alone, speaking during the Coming of Age ceremony, or something else that she or he has not yet found the courage to do. In meetings with Rev. Anya, Coming of Age participants will delve deeper into UU theology and worship and think about their own beliefs and ways they wish to engage in spiritual practices and leadership. Participating in the program will add meaning to this important transition and will help develop significant life skills.

We hope you will join with others to mark important events in your life's journey and to grow in spirit. As you search for ways to do this, know that UUCS is delighted to welcome you and to share these special moments.

*Children's Religious Education topics and a list of programs and events for children and families is on the calendar at the UUCS website, [www.uusterling.org](http://www.uusterling.org).*

---

## SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR CONGREGATIONAL RETREAT

Our retreat will be held on **Saturday, October 19th**, from 11:00 am to 2:30 pm at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax (2709 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton, VA 22124). All are welcome!

We will have fun working with facilitator Sarah Keely and deepening our relationships with others in the congregation. Sarah is a trained Enneagram specialist. The Enneagram is a geometric figure that delineates the nine basic personality types of human nature and their complex interrelationships. It can be extremely useful as a source of self-knowledge because it acts as a kind of "mirror" to reveal features of our personalities that normally are invisible to us.

We will share a meal, play games, and discover deeper self knowledge that will serve us as individuals and a congregation.

All ages are welcome and will participate together for some portions of the retreat. During other portions, they will engage in age-suitable and fun projects.

## A MONTH OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

### September: Journey

Members of our congregation are invited to engage the practice of *Lectio Divina*. *Lectio Divina* is Latin for divine reading, spiritual reading, or holy reading, and represents a traditional practice of scriptural reading intended to promote communion with that which is ultimately meaningful. It is a way of praying or meditating with sacred words that calls one to study, ponder, listen and, finally, rejoice within the soul. Unitarian Universalists embrace a wide-reaching definition of scripture, finding words of profound meaning in the works of the world religions, scientists, poets, and the experiences of our own lives.

Find the time in your day to read each piece every day. Read, pause, read again, pause, and then reflect. You may choose to write each quote in a journal and add notes from your reflections. You may choose to read each piece to your family at the dinner table. You may choose to read in the morning or before sleep. You may choose to use the piece to gather your spirit for prayer or meditation.

#### September 1

**From Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness***

*It is good to have an end to journey toward; but it is the journey that matters, in the end.*

#### September 2–8

**From Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass***

*Not I, nor anyone else can travel that road for you.*

*You must travel it by yourself.*

*It is not far. It is within reach.*

*Perhaps you have been on it since you were born,  
and did not know.*

*Perhaps it is everywhere—on water and land.*

#### September 9–15

**From Gandalf in the *Return of the King* (film)**

*End? No, the journey doesn't end here. Death is just another path, one that we all must take. The grey rain-curtain of this world rolls back, and all turns to silver glass, and then you see it.*

#### September 16—22

**From Deepak Chopra, *The Book of Secrets: Unlocking the Hidden Dimensions of Your Life***

*No single decision you ever made has led in a straight line to where you find yourself now. You peeked down some roads and took a few steps before turning back. You followed some roads that came to a dead end and others that got lost at too many intersections. Ultimately, all roads are connected to all other roads.*

#### September 23—29

**From Hermann Hesse, *Siddharta***

*Whither will my path yet lead me? This path is stupid, it goes in spirals, perhaps in circles, but whichever way it goes, I will follow it.*

#### September 30

**Wendell Berry, *Jayber Crow***

*If you could do it, I suppose, it would be a good idea to live your life in a straight line—starting, say, in the Dark Wood of Error, and proceeding by logical steps through Hell and Purgatory and into Heaven. Or you could take the King's Highway past the appropriately named dangers, toils, and snares, and finally cross the River of Death and enter the Celestial City. But that is not the way I have done it, so far. I am a pilgrim, but my pilgrimage has been wandering and unmarked. Often what has looked like a straight line to me has been a circling or a doubling back. I have been in the Dark Wood of Error any number of times. I have known something of Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven, but not always in that order. The names of many snares and dangers have been made known to me, but I have seen them only in looking back. Often I have not known where I was going until I was already there. I have had my share of desires and goals, but my life has come to me or I have gone to it mainly by way of mistakes and surprises. Often I have received better than I deserved. Often my fairest hopes have rested on bad mistakes. I am an ignorant pilgrim, crossing a dark valley. And yet for a long time, looking back, I have been unable to shake off the feeling that I have been led—make of that what you will.*

## SACRED STORY FOR ALL AGES

### *The Weeping Buddha*

When people talk about *the Buddha*, they usually mean Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism. However, the word Buddha refers to a person who is fully awakened, or enlightened, and there are several Buddhas. There are also several possible paths to enlightenment in Buddhism. This is the story of the Weeping Buddha and his path.

While he was still a young man, the warrior Buddha left his family and friends to go and fight wars far over the oceans. When he returned to the Indonesian Islands many years later, in a ferocious battle he came across an adversary wearing a mask. In this particular battle and in many following battles these two warriors fought, neither being able to slay the other. Then in one great battle the warrior Buddha defeated the masked warrior, and when he removed the mask he recognized the face of his best friend. Upon this realization he started crying and renounced violence, hatred, and all other principles that he had stood for and started to travel around helping the young, the sick, the aged, and anyone else who might need his help. Thus he was now called the Weeping

Buddha. He is weeping for the sins of the world. If you rub his muscular back, he will absorb all the pain and anguish that you might be feeling.

One of the paths to Enlightenment is to realize the fallacy of violence. The statue of the Weeping Buddha represents this path.



### *Family Discussion*

If you think of your life as a path, what does it look like?

When have you turned toward peace and love?

How have you helped others?

What goals, values, or ideas help you decide how you will live?

What has happened in your life that changed the choices you make and, therefore, the path of your life? This may be as dramatic as the Weeping Buddha's experience or it may be a seemingly common incident.

## ACTING ON OUR FAITH



UUCS partners with the 6th grade class at the New Life School in Uganda. Last year, Channing Rusher visited and shared photos and stories of her experience teaching at the school and our children exchange letters with the 6th grade students. The congregation's partnership

inspired Charlie, Maggie, and Molly Lum. They set up a lemonade stand this summer and raised \$40 for the school.

*How do you act on your faith? Share your stories with Director of Religious Education Linda Weaver, Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael, or the newsletter team.*

### Want to share something in the October newsletter?

- ✓ Reflections or articles related to the October liturgical theme, *Covenant*
- ✓ Announcements (including those related to events that will take place in October and the first two weeks of November)
- ✓ Group or committee updates (what you accomplished, what's planned for next month, etc.)
- ✓ Recent photos taken at UUCS or during UUCS events.

Please send anything you'd like to include to [newsletter@uusterling.org](mailto:newsletter@uusterling.org) by September 15th.

## CALENDAR

### Stay Up to Date With UUCS Events

SEPTEMBER	////////////////////////////////////
<b>Sunday, 9/1</b>	<p><b>10:30 am — Worship Service: “Who Is My Neighbor?”</b> The biblical mandate is elusive. Who are our neighbors? Our actual neighbors, the people that we did not choose to live or be in close quarters with, may be the most difficult people for us to love. What do we gain by trying? Scott Zeiter will provide special piano music.</p> <p><b>Noon — Inquirer’s Conversation in Rev. Anya’s office. All newcomers are welcome.</b></p>
<b>Sunday, 9/8</b>	<p><b>9:30 am — Nursery Family Breakfast and Orientation</b> Families with nursery-age children and the nursery care providers are welcome.</p> <p><b>10:30 am — Worship Service: “Navigating a Sea Change”</b> The annual Water Communion service invites us to celebrate the beginning of the church year and reflect on changes in our lives, our congregation, and our world. The Women’s Choir will sing and Clarissa Marcus, vocalist, and Scott Findley, clarinetist, will provide special music. The service is intergenerational: all ages are welcome.</p>
<b>Sunday, 9/15</b>	<p><b>10:30 am — Worship Service: “Telling Our Journey Through Story”</b> A hard journey can give you a good story to tell. We relive our stories each time we share them. Sometimes they get better, sometimes worse. Why is there so much power in telling our stories?</p>
<b>Sunday, 9/22</b>	<p><b>9:00 am — 7–9th Grade Class Orientation Breakfast</b> Students and their parents are welcome.</p> <p><b>10:30 am — Worship Service: “Whom Do You Serve?”</b> Our worship engages the theme of service and invites us to reflect on our capacity to build the world we dream about. Our UUCS band will rock the house with worshipful favorites. Following the service, stay for our Ministries Fair, where you can explore the many ministries that are UUCS and learn how you can support our congregation and the wider community through these ministries.</p> <p><b>Noon — Youth Group Orientation Lunch</b> Youth (high school age) and their parents are welcome.</p>
<b>Sunday, 9/29</b>	<p><b>10:30 am — Worship Service: “Conquering In the Name of Jesus: The Doctrine of Christian Discovery”</b> In 1493, Pope Alexander VI issued a ruling that continues to infest the lives of indigenous peoples the world over—one that has been adopted into U.S. law and that continues to enable religious imperialism and cultural genocide. Come learn about this foundational edict and how it remains a scourge on our world today.</p>

*The paintings of Elise Nicely will be on exhibit in the sanctuary from August 29 through October 15. Art exhibits are a continuing fundraiser at UUCS. The church receives a 20% commission on sales. For information please contact Judy Gruner or Trish Harris. To learn more about the artist, visit [www.elisenicely.com](http://www.elisenicely.com).*

**CALENDAR** CONTINUED

<b>OCTOBER</b>	////////////////////////////////////
<b>Friday, 10/4</b>	<b>6:00 pm — <i>First Friday: Game Night</i></b>
<b>Saturday, 10/5</b>	<b>12:30 pm – 4:30 pm — <i>Leadership Gathering</i></b>
<b>Sunday, 10/6</b>	<b>9:15 am — <i>Preschool and Elementary Class Family Breakfast</i></b> Students and their parents are welcome.  <b>10:30 am — <i>Worship Service</i></b>  <b>Noon — <i>Inquirer's Conversation in Rev. Anya's office. All newcomers are welcome.</i></b>
<b>Sunday, 10/13</b>	<b>10:30 am — <i>Worship Service</i></b>
<b>Sunday, 10/19</b>	<b>11:00 am – 2:30 pm — <i>Congregational Retreat</i></b> See page 4 for details.



*Many thanks to those who gave their time to freshen up our space!*