

Mission

Don't be satisfied with stories, how things have gone with others.

Unfold your own myth.

— Rumi, *The Essential Rumi*

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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

Who told us that we would be powerless? Why do we so often go on believing that we are?

This past year, our board voted to add our congregation's name to an Amicus Brief connected to the legal action in support of equal marriage. That amicus brief joined the legions of actions taken over the centuries and brought about a legal victory. The ban on same-sex marriage in Virginia has been declared unconstitutional. Our congregation played a role at the pivotal moment. Our power helped to move a mountain.

"Don't be satisfied with stories, how things have gone with others. Unfold your own myth," says the poet Jalal al din Rumi. Unitarian Universalists too often downplay our capacity. We imagine ourselves a "small" religion, with few adherents and little power. We imagine that only a small segment of the population would be drawn to our worship, our community, our vision. We "story" ourselves as weak, and we live into that story. It's time—in fact, it's long been time—that we unfolded our own myth.

A friend asks you, "What kind of church do you attend?" What story will you tell?

A. I go to a small church that isn't really like a church, where you can believe anything you want.

B. I love my congregation: it's exactly what I always imagined a congregation—a religion—could be. We are asked to live our own faith in acts of justice and love. The result is a community with the power to transform our world. It certainly has transformed my life and my family's life.

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Our Own Myth, Unfolding



Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael

Which story is more true? Why do we so often give answer A when B spells our truth with much more grace and power? Are we afraid of our capacity? Are we embarrassed by our religion?

Don't be satisfied with the stories that sound more like apologies than proclamations! When we ache, our congregation consoles

us. When we grieve, our congregation grieves with us. When we falter in unknowing, the wisdom of our tradition gives us hope. When we commit to acts of justice, we move mountains.

www.uusterling.org

22135 Davis Drive
Sterling, VA 20167

(703) 406-3068

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Defining Our Mission



*Paul Roche,
Board President*

“Good Morning, Mr. Phelps. Your mission, should you decide to accept it...”

So began the old TV show Mission Impossible. Of course Jim Phelps and the Impossible Missions Force routinely accomplished the impossible mission laid out on each cassette tape. But they were told exactly what their mission was. Which helps, I think.

When we talk about “mission” in our church, we do not have that luxury. No one tells us what we are supposed to accomplish or when we have accomplished it. If you are like me, you know vaguely what our mission is at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Sterling, but also if you are like me, maybe it is not that easy to put into words.

Our official mission, as defined by the Congregation, is:

In the Experience of Worship we express our awe, contemplate the Sacred, interpret the wisdom of religion, and explore the insights of science.

In Community we listen to and empower one another to seek, doubt and grow.

In Learning we emphasize compassion, open-mindedness and spiritual connection.

In Justice Making we put our faith in action through comprehensive and sustained programs.

In Gratitude we honor our obligation to the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

I think this does a good job of trying to capture the mystery and awe of UUCS. Just think about what we are. A bunch of strangers who come together to worship, to console, to comfort, and to challenge one another—and who pool our monies generously to hire a staff to support these spiritual needs. This is anti-entropy at work!

My gut understanding of our mission—of what we want to accomplish—is to spread our religion across Loudoun and Western Fairfax Counties. There are thousands of people who need to be acquainted with our message. Thousands of people

who want to explore their own spirituality on their own terms; who seek a community that will be with them through thick and thin. So how do we do that?

We should enjoy the community we (each of us) have built here, the staff we have hired, our wonderful Rev Anya; but we must not be selfish! How can we in good conscience keep this wonderful good news to ourselves? In short, we need to get the word out.

Over the next year, you will see us push a little harder for outward-looking activities. The Community Table of Loudoun project, and the dinner it will host on September 23, is a great way to reach out into the community to share our existence while helping those in need in our community. We will be expanding our advertising including the purchase of a tent for a booth at various events, including Sterlingfest, Northern Virginia’s first Pride Festival, and others.

What can you do? Say yes when asked to volunteer a few hours in the booth for these events. Talk to your friends and invite them to church. Let’s get this party started!

Want to share something in the October newsletter?

- ✓ **Reflections or articles related to the October liturgical theme, *forgiveness***
- ✓ **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 by Sept. 15th.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Building the World We Dream About



Linda Weaver,
Director of Religious
Education

As I write this article, my heart is hurting for a suffering world. My heart is hurting for the family of friends of Michael Brown and for all who live in fear because of the color of their skin. My heart is hurting for those whose lives were touched by Robin Williams and for all who live in sadness and despair. My heart is hurting for the people of Gaza, Israel, Ukraine, and Iraq and all who suffer due to war and division. My heart is hurting for the people of West Africa and all who suffer from disease and disability. But I find hope and joy in the dreams that the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Sterling dares to act on.

This congregation lives its mission boldly in the face of suffering. We offer a vision of a world of compassion, open-mindedness, and justice. We live and model this vision within a loving and caring congregational community. We nurture it within our children, teens, and ourselves and share it with the world in our every day actions. We also celebrate the abundance and joy we experience when we hold up this vision and when we live it, knowing that we truly are building the world we dream about.

Children are central to this dream. They are the future. They will experience the results of our actions. They will carry on the work we have begun, and they will teach generations to come. Within our religious education program, we are dedicated to the work and joy of nurturing these young minds, hearts, bodies, and spirits and to creating a supportive and caring multigenerational community that embraces them and their families.

On Sunday mornings, children carry on this dream as they engage with topics that are relevant to their daily lives. They learn how to live well with others as they play games or participate in skits. They explore their own beliefs and hear about the beliefs of others as they create art or share stories. They act on their faith in love and justice as they reach out to people nearby or around the world. Whether they are packing bags of food for Community Table of Loudoun, creating toys for animals awaiting adoption, or writing letters to children at our partner school in Uganda, they are making a difference in the world. At the same time, the children and the adults who

join them are celebrating the hope and the joy that compassion and caring bring to all of our lives. Together, we are living the mission of building the world we dream about.

If you have not yet done so, we welcome you to join us in this journey and celebration. Whoever you are, wherever you may be, may your sense of mission fill your life with more love, more hope, and more joy.

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.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

RE Orientation for Parents

Parents, come to an RE orientation breakfast or lunch! Check the list below for the date that matches your child's age and RSVP to Linda Weaver (redirector@uusterling.org).

Nursery students: breakfast at 9:30 am on Sunday, September 7

Preschool–third grade students: breakfast at 9:30 am on Sunday, September 21

Fourth–eighth grade students: lunch at noon on Sunday, October 5

Youth students (grade 9 and up): lunch at noon on Sunday, September 28

Spiritual Eldering Event

River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Bethesda, MD, is hosting an event for spiritual eldering on October 12 from 2–6:00 pm. The Encounter involves a series of reflections on gratitude, forgiveness, and empowerment in the context of the spiritual eldering movement, followed by small group discussions and a concluding panel. There will be a \$20 registration fee. For more information or to register, visit www.rruuc.org.

A MONTH OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Mission

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.

August 28–September 3 If Love Be There by Robert T. Weston

*This day, setting aside all that divides me from others;
This day, remembering that the world is beautiful
To him who is willing that it be so
And that into the open, eager heart
The beauty enters in, if love be there.*

*This day, I will make a part of the song of life.
There may be grief, but if there be love it will be overcome.
There may be pain, but it can be borne with dignity and
courage.
There may be difficulty, but it can be turned to strength.
Remembering that the world is beautiful
If I will let it be so for others whom I meet,
This day I will make a part of the song of life.*

September 4–10 From the Tao Te Ching, #8

*The supreme good is like water,
which nourishes all things without trying to.
It is content with the low places that people disdain.*

In dwelling, live close to the ground.

*In thinking, keep to the simple.
In conflict, be fair and generous.
In governing, don't try to control.
In work, do what you enjoy.
In family life, be completely present.*

September 11–17 Inspiration from the writer Jack London

I would rather be ashes than dust! I would rather that my spark should burn out in a brilliant blaze than it should be stifled by dry rot. I would rather be a superb meteor, every atom of me in magnificent glow, than a sleepy and permanent planet. The proper function of man is to live, not to exist. I shall not waste my days in trying to prolong them. I shall use my time.

September 18–24 A Provocation by Unitarian minister William Ellery Channing

To live content with small means; to seek elegance rather than luxury; and refinement rather than fashion; to be worthy, not respectable; and wealthy, not rich; to study hard, think quietly, talk gently, act frankly; to listen to stars and birds, to babes and sages, with open heart; to bear all cheerfully, do all bravely, await occasion, hurry never; in a word, to let the spiritual, unbidden and unconscious grow up through the common. This is to be my symphony.

September 25–October 4 Inspiration by Rev. Howard Thurman

Don't ask yourself what the world needs; ask yourself what makes you come alive. And then go and do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.

September Justice Allocation

UUCS JTW Poetry Slam

The Journey Toward Wholeness (JTW) Transformation Team facilitates the conversation within our congregation about institutional racism. Our goal is to respond to injury and injustice with compassion. As part of our commitment to "Build the World We Dream About" the Journey Towards Wholeness Team at UUCS hosts the Jazz Poetry Slam on Saturday, November 8, 2014 at 7:00 PM at UUCS closing the Racial Justice Conference.

SACRED STORY FOR ALL AGES



George de Benneville was born in London in 1703. At that time, children were expected to learn a trade and begin working much earlier than children now. When he was twelve years old, George was sent to sea to learn to be a navigator.

The ship he was placed on went to the African coast of the Mediterranean Sea. While docked at Algiers, George walked along the deck of the ship and saw some of the people of the city bringing refreshments to sell. *In the Life and Trance of George deBenneville*, he wrote about this experience:

One of them slipped down and tore a piece out of one of his legs. Two of his companions, having lain him on the deck, each of them kissed the wound, shedding tears upon it, then turned towards the rising of the sun, they cried in such a manner that I was much moved with anger at their making such a noise and ordered my waiter to bring them before me. Upon demanding the reason of their noise, they perceived that I was angry, asked my pardon, and told me the cause was owing to one of their brothers having hurt his leg by a fall and that they kissed the wound in order to sympathize with him, and likewise shed tears upon it and took part with him; and as tears were saltish, they [were] a good remedy to heal the same; and the reason of their turning towards the sun's rising was to invoke him who created the sun to have compassion upon their poor brother, and prayed he would please to heal him. Upon that I was so convinced, and moved within, that I thought my heart would break, and that my life was about to leave me. My eyes were filled with tears, and I felt such an internal condemnation, that I was obliged to cry

out and say, "Are these Heathens? No; I confess before God they are Christians, and I myself am a Heathen!" Behold the first conviction that the grace of our Sovereign Good employed: he was pleased to convince a white person by blacks! One who carried the name of a Christian by a pagan, and who was obliged to confess himself but a heathen. But that was soon overcome and forgot. But God who always seeks to convince and save his poor creatures, did not leave his poor wandering sheep.

Questions for Discussion

George de Benneville was raised in the English court, but at twelve he went to sea to learn to be a navigator. How do you think George deBenneville's life at twelve compared to that of twelve-year-olds you know? What was he learning and how? What experiences would he be having as part of a ship's crew?

How much do you think George would have known about people of other races and religions? How do you think the experience in this story changed his understanding? Reread the last two sentences. What do you think happened? Why is this an important part of the story?

Is there anything you wonder about the lives of family members, friends, or people you know who are different than you? If so, what can you or your family do to learn more?

After reflecting on this story and other experiences this month, how would you like to live so that you come more fully alive? As appropriate, talk with each other about your passions, values, priorities, and goals and how they have changed over time. How can you support each other in finding and living into your own evolving missions?

9/23: UUCS HELPS FIGHT HUNGER IN LOUDOUN COUNTY

By Harry Harris

According to a recent Feed America study, more than 46 million Americans rely on the SNAP program, food pantries, and other charitable efforts to secure enough food to get by. Of these households, 89% have children and almost 80% of those admit to purchasing inexpensive, unhealthy food to feed their families. Twenty percent of food insecure families are in our military. UUCS, Christ Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church, and Blessed Assurance Temple have teamed up to prepare and serve an elegant, free dinner at **5:30 pm on September 23** to residents of eastern Loudoun County who are food insecure. This is part of a countywide, interfaith initiative branded Community Table of Loudoun (CTL), which is intended to bring food with dignity to the more than 17,000 people in the county who don't have the food blessing most of us enjoy.

We need people to cook and deliver chicken, carrots, and potatoes; set up tables; serve the guests; and clean up. We also need entertainers to provide wonderful music during the dinner. **To join our team**, come see us at the signup table in the fellowship area each Sunday until the event, or email Harry Harris (hharris3226@gmail.com) or Kristin Harper (harper.kristinh@gmail.com) for the link to sign up online (the link is also in our weekly e-newsletter, Illuminate). This is an opportunity to learn more about hunger in America, take a stand against the social injustice of food insecurity, and join in fellowship across the county to serve those in need.



TOM TEASLEY CONCERT AT UUCS

Tom Teasley is described in the Washington Post as “a percussionist in the widest and most exuberant sense of the word.” Tom tours frequently throughout the world and has given historic performances in Saudi Arabia, the West Bank, and Jerusalem. This performance will be a family-friendly event full of learning and laughter. Bring your own lunch or purchase a snack. Suggested donations are \$5 a person or \$10 a family. It will be held at **noon on Sunday, September 7**, at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Sterling. Invite your friends!

MEALS NEEDED FOR DIANA MENEFFEE

By Denise Lorenz

If you would like help Diana recover from major surgery by making her a meal, you can access the meal schedule by visiting TakeThemAMeal.com and locating the schedule by recipient last name (Menefee) and password (Sterling).

If you would like to contribute, but live too far from Diana (Leesburg), Lindy Reeder (mlreeder@gmail.com) or Denise Lorenz (deniselorenz@verizon) may be able to facilitate delivery. If you have questions, please contact Denise at 703-475-8692.

ABOUT DIANA: Diana has lived in the Washington area all her long life. She raised 5 children, mostly on her own, working at the Loudoun County Department of Social Services until her retirement 15 years ago. Diana was an active member of the Fairfax Unitarian Church from the 1970s until she joined the Sterling church several years ago. She is a founding member of the multi-cultural, interdenominational community choral group, Mosaic Harmony, which recently celebrated its 20th anniversary. Diana truly embodies the UU tradition of hospitality. Over the almost 40 years that I've known her, I've never seen her turn away any of the many needy souls who manage to find their way to her Leesburg home. Her friendship is one of the great blessings of my life.

CALENDAR

Stay Up to Date With UUCS Events

SEPTEMBER	////////////////////////////////////
<p>Sunday, 9/7</p>	<p>9:30 am — RE orientation breakfast for parents of children in the nursery</p> <p>10:30 am — Worship Service: “In the Beginning” A water communion ingathering service that celebrates mythic tales of origination and invites us to begin again. Bring a container of water from your summer (lake, river, pool, faucet, etc.) to add to our common vessel. Tom Teasley, world renowned percussionist, will fill our intergenerational service with joyous music.</p> <p>Noon — Tom Teasley concert All ages are welcome. Invite friends and family!</p> <p>Please note that the inquirer’s class will meet on the second Sunday this month.</p>
<p>Sunday, 9/14</p>	<p>10:30 am — Worship Service: “Sometimes the Bible Is Wrong” Rev. Anya confronts the theological trend of biblical literalism, our choir sings, and an inquirer’s conversation follows the service at noon.</p> <p>Noon — Inquirer’s Class in Rev. Anya’s office All newcomers are welcome.</p>
<p>Wednesday, 9/17</p>	<p>6:45 pm — Evening Worship: “Mission” Rev. Anya leads the first in our monthly evening worship services, during which we will seek rest and find beloved community.</p>
<p>Saturday, 9/20</p>	<p>6:00 pm — UUCS 20th Anniversary Gala For more information and for tickets, visit http://uusterling.org/wordpress/donate/broadway-night-20th-anniversary-gala</p>
<p>Sunday, 9/21</p>	<p>9:30 am — RE orientation breakfast for parents of children in preschool–3rd grade</p> <p>10:30 am — Worship Service: “A Rising Tide” Spirituality has many meanings and takes many forms in our Unitarian Universalist congregations. But does spirituality help to ensure a growing, stronger, and more vital congregation? Mark will explore this connection and demonstrate how spirituality can “lift all boats” in your beloved church community.</p> <p>Mark Bernstein has been a member of the UU Church of Delaware County in Media, PA for 21 years and has served in just about every capacity except making coffee. He is a member of the Congregational Life Staff of the Central East Region of the UUA.</p>
<p>Tuesday, 9/23</p>	<p>5:30 pm — Community Table of Loudoun dinner Please see the article on page 6 for details.</p>

Sunday, 9/28	<p>10:30 am — Worship Service: “Violence Will Not Define Me” We are shaken daily by the violence that shakes our world. Rev. Anya struggles to reconcile the dream of living a compassionate life with the reality of living amidst violence. Our choir offers meditative and contemplative music, and we honor the Jewish holiday of Roshashana.</p> <p>Noon — RE orientation lunch for parents of youth (grade 9 and up)</p>
O C T O B E R	
Sunday, 10/5	<p>10:30 am — Worship Service</p> <p>Noon — RE orientation lunch for parents of children in grades 4–8</p> <p>Noon — Inquirer’s Class in Rev. Anya’s office All newcomers are welcome.</p>
Sunday, 10/12	<p>10:30 am — Worship Service</p> <p>2:00–6:00 pm — Spiritual eldering event at River Road UU Congregation Please see the article on page 3 for details.</p>


Dynamic Youth Choir

Practices: weekly, Tuesday evening, 6-7pm, September - June

Led By: Kris Adams, Celebrated Youth and Adult Choir Director

For: 1st Grade - 12th Grade

Commitment: \$100.00 a child or \$200.00 a family, plus attend and assist at 3 youth choir practices a year.



Know any other youth that would love this opportunity?
 Please share this invitation beyond our congregational community.
 (Fill out and place in the offering basket, or take home and email Administrator@uusterling.org)

Name: _____ Child(s) Age(s): _____ Contact Info: _____

Sign Up Today! Practice begins Tuesday, Sept. 9, at 6PM!