

## Gratitude

*As life becomes harder and more threatening, it also becomes richer,  
because the fewer expectations we have, the more good things of life  
become unexpected gifts that we accept with gratitude.*

— Ety Hillesum

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**W**ho has time to relax?  
Asked rhetorically,  
that is a sentiment  
that speaks to many of us. The  
already-considerable demands on  
our time—family, work, exercise,  
daily commutes—might make it  
difficult to imagine setting aside 30  
minutes for mindful sitting, breathing, or play.

And yet we know better. We know that if

### MINISTER'S MESSAGE

#### *Time for a Midweek Pause*

*Intern Minister  
John Monroe*

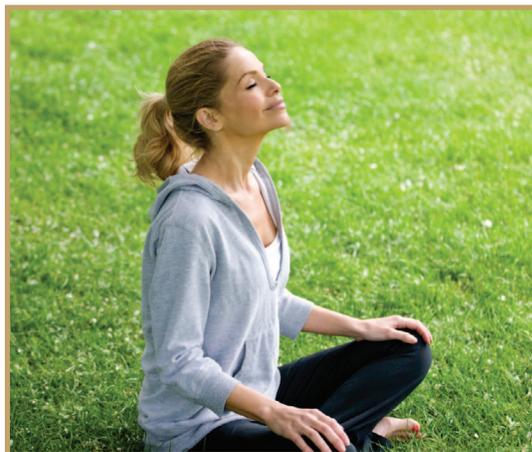
we maintain a frantic pace, it  
diminishes our quality of life. We  
know—even if we don't like to  
admit it—that we need to slow  
down and care for ourselves.

That is the idea behind the Weekly  
Spiritual Practice, happening at  
UUCS every Wednesday at 7:00

pm. Each week, we focus on a different spiritual  
practice, including silent, directed meditation; a  
healing prayer circle; play as a spiritual practice;  
and a "sound bath" meditation provided by  
Woven Green, a group that integrates ancient  
and modern instruments to create a meditative  
soundscape.

Each week offers us a different way to take a  
pause and renew our spirits. Check out the full  
schedule on the other side of this page.

Let's ask the question again, this time as an invitation  
to a midweek pause: Who has time to relax?



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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### Communication



Paul Roche,  
Board President

Communication! In all the studies of organizational dynamics, one thing always bubbles to the top as the biggest problem: communication. This is true in the company or government agency where you work, in the charitable work you do, and even in your home. It is also true in churches.

We are bombarded every day with messages trying to lodge information in our overcrowded minds. Websites and newspaper ads try to get our attention, and live TV seems more like live commercials with a side of TV show.

So how best to let the congregation know what's going on and when? Well, we have lots of information outlets: some designed for specific audiences, such as Religious Education parents; some more outward facing to people searching for a church; and some to inform our members, Friends, and visitors about things happening this week and small groups that are more ongoing. A lot of time and energy goes into publishing these info blasts, and our communications folks and Cindy, our office administrator, deserve praise for their efforts.

We have:

- The church website,
- The (now quarterly) newsletter,
- The Facebook page,
- The news update passed out with the Order of Service as you enter the Sanctuary on Sunday,
- The weekly "Illuminate" delivered to your email,
- The weekly Religious Education newsletter,
- Sign-up sheets,
- Oral announcements (we try hard to limit these),
- Posters,
- Fliers,
- The newly mounted TV in the lobby (it will soon will show looping info about what is going on in church),
- And of course, word of mouth!

Phew, that's a lot of communicating. But it is important as we make the transition from a pastoral-sized church to a

program-sized church that we expand our opportunities to more and more people, in more and more ways. Making sure people know what opportunities there are to connect is crucial to smoothly growing into our long term vision.

Check 'em all out!

## Changes to the UUCS Newsletter

**The communications team has been evaluating the best ways to share information within our growing congregation. The Illuminate weekly email seems to be an effective and timely way to share upcoming events and important news. We've also been testing an upcoming events flier with the orders of service on Sundays.**

**The newsletter serves our need for reflective articles and sharing the really significant events in the life of our congregation. It seems that preparing the newsletter four times a year rather than every month will simplify our efforts and still meet this need. So starting next month, the newsletter will come out quarterly rather than monthly. Expect to see newsletters in December, March, June, and September.**

**Want to share something in the spring newsletter?**

- ✓ Reflections or articles related to the liturgical themes (December, January, and February will be peace, grace, and prayer, respectively)
- ✓ Recent photos taken at UUCS or during UUCS events
- ✓ Introductions from new members.

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

## NOVEMBER HOSPITALITY

*If your last name begins with G thru J, please bring food to share during Fellowship, which begins at 10:30 am.*

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

### Sharing the Monthly Theme With Children: Gratitude



Linda Weaver,  
Director of Religious  
Education

With the wealth, abundance, and competition that exists in Northern Virginia, it is easy for our children to focus on what they don't have. Many can point to friends with more toys, more exciting activities, and bigger houses. However, focusing on what we don't have can lead to unhappiness, envy, and a lack of compassion for others.

Luckily, at a young age my son figured out the benefits of enjoying what he had. A classmate got at least one new video game every week. However, my son told me he felt sorry for this friend because he enjoyed the one new game he got just a few times a year much more than his friend could ever enjoy the hundreds of games he had. Not only could my son savor playing a video game he really wanted, but talking with friends about the latest video games, weighing the choices, anticipating and saving money for a new game added to the fun.

Scientific studies have shown that practicing gratitude has many positive benefits. Adults and teens who practiced gratitude experienced increased happiness and optimism and strengthened social connections. They acted with generosity and compassion more often, and they had less feelings of loneliness. With all of these benefits it makes sense to nurture gratitude in our children. Our 9:30 children's class will be experiencing gratitude this month and you can try out some of the activities below at home.

For more information, check out the blog by Giacomo Bono and Jeffrey J. Froh at [www.psychologytoday.com/blog/making-grateful-kids](http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/making-grateful-kids). Bono and Froy study gratitude in teens, and in their blog they share strategies for developing gratitude in children and teens.

## FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Help each family member write their own gratitude prayer. It might be as simple as lists of sentences that begin with the words, "I am thankful for..." Consider sharing these gratitude prayers at dinner or before bedtime each night. After several days of reflecting on the things for which you are thankful, do you notice any changes in how you view your day or the world?

Share stories about people who have been especially kind or helpful. How have their actions made a difference in your life?

Thank someone who has been especially kind or helpful to you. You might send a card or thank them in person. Don't forget to tell them how much their actions helped you.

*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).*



*Our October 30th Campfire Stories event was attend by about 50 people of all ages. We shared songs, scary stories, s'mores, and fellowship. Some great costumes too!*

## INTRODUCING OUR NEW MEMBERS



*Rhonda Paterson*

**I joined UUCS on:** Oct. 17, 2015

**I joined because** of two statements I hear and see every Sunday. At the start of every service, folks are welcomed with these words:

“Whoever you are, wherever you come from, whatever your identity, age, ability, or history know that you are welcome to bring your full self here.” Also, UUCS’s vision statement is: “We are building the world we dream about, where all souls thrive in a diverse and loving community, acting daily on our commitment to justice.” The welcome that I receive every Sunday and the spirit of every church activity I participate in has made me feel that those two statements are taken very seriously here. I feel very fortunate to have found a community that shares my values and that challenges me in a loving way to do better and better at actually living those values daily too.

**Something you might not know about me is:** I’m a career changer. I’ve almost finished my nursing degree and plan to soon become an oncology nurse. Before that I was a mathematician and a software developer/architect.

**You can find me at UUCS:** on Sundays sometimes at the early service and sometimes at the late one. I also attend the monthly Journey Towards Wholeness meetings and participate in as many of the Social Justice activities as I can possibly squeeze into my schedule. I’ll probably become a regular at the weekly Wednesday night meditations too.



*Marlene Barney*

**I joined UUCS on:** Oct. 17, 2015; My husband, Tony, and I started attending fairly regularly in the summer (July/August) of 2014.

**I joined because:** The spiritual,

secular, and social values of our minister and UUCS community felt like the right fit.

**Something you might not know about me:** Gosh, where do I start? I co-produce (with Tony) and sometimes host a public access TV political panel discussion program, “The Road to...,” which is broadcast in Fairfax County and on YouTube.

**You can find me at UUCS:** On Tuesday evenings at the UUCS Choir rehearsal, the first Wednesday of the month in the UUCS Writers’ Group, and most Sundays enjoying UU services and singing in the Choir.



*Susan Reese*

**I joined UUCS on:** Oct. 17, 2015

**I joined because** there were things missing in my life. Some I could easily identify: the loss of my husband and the loss of my long-time neighborhood community, since I had moved to

Ashburn from Arlington to be near my daughter and grandchildren. Others were less easily identifiable, spirituality perhaps? The first time I came to UUCS, I was warmly welcomed at the door. Then I heard the service on ethical eating, which resonated with me, a long-time vegetarian. I stayed for the inquirers’ meeting and learned about the ideals of social justice and a diverse and loving community. I walked out that day thinking, “I have been a Unitarian Universalist all these years and just didn’t know it.” I came seeking a new community, and I feel as if I have found that and so much more. Each week, the service provides me with great joy, and sometimes with sadness, but always with something to think about and explore. I only hope I have gifts to give that are half as worthy as the ones that have already been given to me by this congregation.

**Something you might not know about me:** I was raised in what I describe as a “slightly dysfunctional Brady Bunch” family, because I have two biological sisters, a step-sister and two step-brothers. Sadly, my

*Continued on page 5*

*New Members, continued from page 4*

two biological sisters and I are the only ones left, except for my two much-younger half-sisters (yes, there are actually two more of us, but I have only met one of them). The family includes two artists and two writers, so needless to say, we are an eccentric bunch, and, therefore, if you find me or my sense of humor a bit odd sometimes, just know that there is a reason for it.

**You can find me at UUCS** attending the early service on Sunday mornings (since my alarm clock is of the furry, four-legged and persistent variety) and sometimes even earlier, since I have recently volunteered to help with hospitality. I hope you will be able to find me at other events too, as I try to find the courage and confidence to participate in those as well.



*October 8th Pride Service at Unity Fairfax. Over 15 faith traditions were represented. Our Minister, Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael, and UUCS Board President Paul Roche, participated in the liturgy.*

## GENERAL ARTICLES

### *Coping With the Stress of Caring*

BY BONNIE LEPOFF

If you are caring for someone who is seriously ill or physically or mentally disabled, come to this workshop on Saturday, November 14, at 10:00 am. Jamie Losikoff-Kent, LCSW, a Grief & Bereavement Counselor with Capital Hospice, will speak to your needs in this two hour workshop. Sign up at church or call the church administrator.



*The UUCS Booth utilized by our Northern Virginia Cluster of UU Congregations at NoVA PrideFest on Saturday, Oct. 3.*

## 19TH ANNUAL UUCS AUCTION, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21ST

**The UUCS Auction**—the largest social event of the year and a huge church fundraiser—is just around the corner, so make plans to join the fun! Tickets are \$20 each and include a fabulous Mediterranean dinner including appetizers, dessert, wine, beer, and soft drinks. Buy your tickets via cash, check, or credit card at the auction area after services or [online at the UUCS website](#) at Auction under the Donate tab.

Start the party early (5:45 pm) by attending a **Wine and Cheese Tasting** hosted by Rev. Anya and Rev. Scott. There are only 20 spots available for this exclusive event, so purchase your tickets for \$50 each (includes auction/dinner admission) at the auction area.

We have an amazing array of offerings this year. Stay tuned for the Auction Catalog via email. For those who can't attend the event, we'll be doing an **online auction** for a select number of items beginning Nov. 12 and ending Nov. 23. Look for more information in *Illuminate*.



## SACRED STORY FOR ALL AGES

### *The Magnificent Strawberry: A Zen Parable*

A Buddhist monk was walking through the mountains one day when, out of nowhere, a tiger appeared and chased the monk to the edge of a cliff. The monk took hold of a vine and climbed over the side of the cliff. He looked down and saw another tiger below him. The monk was just hanging there, with tigers above and below and only the vine to hold him. Then, as the monk considered his options, he turned and saw a strawberry.

Holding onto the vine with one hand, he picked the strawberry with the other. He smiled and said to himself, "What a magnificent strawberry!" Then he ate the strawberry.

### *Questions for Discussion*

What tigers, or worries, are chasing you?

What magnificent strawberries do you have in your life? In other words, what do you enjoy or appreciate in your life?

What do you think would happen if you spent more time being grateful for the good things in your life now and less time worrying about the negative?



*UUCS participated in SterlingFest, Oct. 10th. Thanks to all of the volunteers who staffed the booth and did crafts with kids.*



*Our October 30th Campfire Stories event was attended by about 50 people of all ages. We shared songs, scary stories, s'mores, and fellowship. Some great costumes too!*

## GENERAL ARTICLES

### *Holiday Decorating Party*

**Friday, December 11, 6–9:00 pm**

Fun for all ages! Bring a favorite dish to share. Help decorate for the holidays, make gifts and ornaments to take home, or just enjoy food and fellowship. Sign up at the events table online at <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c044ca5a72ea7f58-holiday1>.

### *Holiday Pageant*

It's time to prepare for the annual holiday pageant! The pageant will take place at the 11:15 service on December 20. Contact Linda Weaver ([re-director@uusterling.org](mailto:re-director@uusterling.org)) if you or your child might be interested in participating. There are parts for readers in addition to angels, shepherds, and animals. We will hold an information meeting and read through on Sunday, November 15, at 12:15 pm in the mezzanine.

## A MONTH OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

### Gratitude

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.

#### November 1–7

*Whenever feeling downcast, each person should vitally remember, "For my sake, the entire world was created."*

—Rabbi Yisroel ben Eliezer, Baal Shem Tov  
(founder of Hasidic Judaism)

#### November 8–14

*As life becomes harder and more threatening, it also becomes richer, because the fewer expectations we have, the more good things of life become unexpected gifts that we accept with gratitude.*

—Etty Hillesum, Dutch Jewish writer known for her diaries and correspondence from Westerbork concentration camp

#### November 15–21

*To educate yourself for the feeling of gratitude means to take nothing for granted, but to always seek out and value the kind that will stand behind the action. Nothing that is done for you is a matter of course. Everything originates in a will for the good, which is directed at you. Train yourself never to put off the word or action for the expression of gratitude.*

—Albert Schweitzer

#### November 22–28

*And you receivers—and you are all receivers—assume no weight of gratitude, lest you lay a yoke upon yourself and upon him who gives.*

*Rather rise together with the giver on his gifts as on wings. For to be overmindful of your debt, is to doubt his generosity who has the free-hearted earth for mother, and God for father.*

—Kahlil Gibran, "On Receiving" from *The Prophet*

#### November 29–30

*Religion, according to Alfred North Whitehead, is a phenomenon that begins in wonder and ends in wonder. Feelings of awe, reverence, and gratitude are primary, and these can never be learned from books. We gain them from sitting high on a cliff side, gazing at the sea, lost in reverie and listening to the laughter of children.*

—Gary Kowalski

### November Justice Allocation

#### National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI)

*In November, half of our Sunday morning offerings will go to the National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI). NAMI is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization and is dedicated to improving lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. NAMI offers help and hope through a vision of a better tomorrow in which people affected by mental illness will live happily, productively, and well. For more information, contact Shannon Masiak or visit [www.nami.org/Get-Involved/Donate-to-NAMI#sthash.W3e8xETN.dpuf](http://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/Donate-to-NAMI#sthash.W3e8xETN.dpuf)*

*In September, we collected \$537.00 to support the annual Jazz Poetry Slam.*

*In October, we collected \$633.99 for the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy.*

*Thank you all for your generosity.*

## CALENDAR

### Stay Up to Date With UUCS Events

NOVEMBER	////////////////////////////////////
<b>Sunday, 11/1</b>	<p><b>9:30 and 11:15 am — <i>Worship service: “For My Sake the Entire World Was Created”</i></b>            Some cosmologists and biologists explain human evolution as the “universe becoming conscious of itself.” Rev. Anya reflects on gratitude as an evolutionary advantage—a means to see our relationship to life itself. Lisa Fiorilli and friends will grace our first service with jazz music and the UUCS choir with John Kim will grace the second.</p> <p><b>12:30 pm — <i>Inquirer’s class in Rev. Anya’s office</i></b>            All newcomers are welcome.</p>
<b>Wednesday, 11/4</b>	<p><b>7:00–7:30 pm — <i>Weekly Spiritual Practice</i></b>            Come and unwind! No RSVP required.</p>
<b>Saturday, 11/7</b>	<p><b>6:00 registration; 7:00–10:00 pm — <i>Jazz Poetry Slam</i></b>            Join us for food, a cash wine bar, poetry and prizes, and live jazz. Childcare will be available. Suggested admission donation is \$10; suggested registration donation to slam is \$15. More information is available online at <a href="http://www.uucsjazzpoetryslam.net">www.uucsjazzpoetryslam.net</a>.</p>
<b>Sunday, 11/8</b>	<p><b>9:30 and 11:15 am — <i>Worship Service: “Take Courage, Friends”</i></b>            What does courage require, and how can we find it when we need it most? Rev. Anya leads our service, and special music is provided by John Kim and members of our congregation to honor our Veterans. A veterans’ breakfast precedes our service at 8:00 am in the sanctuary.</p>
<b>Wednesday, 11/11</b>	<p><b>7:00–7:30 pm — <i>Weekly Spiritual Practice</i></b>            Come and unwind! Today’s session will be a healing prayer circle. No RSVP required.</p>
<b>Sunday, 11/15</b>	<p><b>9:30 and 11:15 am — <i>Worship service: “The River Running O’er”</i></b>            As life flows past, we feel the all too common urge to hold tightly to what we know instead of what is changing around us. However, there is another way: releasing ourselves to the river running o’er. Rev. Scott McNeill of the Bull Run congregation will lead us in looking at change and how it relates to our own lives and the church. There will be special music at the 9:30 service by Clarisa Marcus and Harry Harris, and that the youth choir will perform at the 11:15 service.</p> <p><b>12:15 pm — <i>Holiday pageant information meeting and read through</i></b>            Meet with us in the mezzanine if you or your child might be interested in participating in the holiday pageant. There are parts for readers in addition to angels, shepherds, and animals.</p>
<b>Wednesday, 11/18</b>	<p><b>7:00–7:30 pm — <i>Weekly Spiritual Practice</i></b>            Come and unwind! Today’s session will be play as a spiritual practice. No RSVP required.</p>

# CALENDAR

## Continued

<p><b>Saturday, 11/21</b></p>	<p><b>6:00 pm — 19th Annual UUCS Auction and Dinner</b>          This exciting evening, the largest social event and fundraiser of the year, includes a delicious, catered Mediterranean dinner and wine and beer. Tickets are \$20 each and are available at church or online at <a href="http://uusterling.org/donate/auction">http://uusterling.org/donate/auction</a>.</p>
<p><b>Sunday, 11/22</b></p>	<p><b>9:30 and 11:15 am — Worship service: “Abundance”</b>          Rev. Anya leads our annual intergenerational Thanksgiving service with special choir music and a cornbread communion. How much is enough? How can we celebrate plenty?</p>
<p><b>Wednesday, 11/25</b></p>	<p><b>7:00–8:00 pm — Weekly Spiritual Practice</b>          Come and unwind! Today’s session will be a one-hr. Soundbath meditation by Woven Green. No RSVP required.</p>
<p><b>Sunday, 11/29</b></p>	<p><b>9:30 and 11:15 am — Worship service: “The Stories We Tell”</b>          Intern Minister John Monroe reflects on the way that we tell to stories to make meaning of our lives, weaving a rich but sometimes complicated tapestry. John Kim will play at both services.</p>
<p><b>DECEMBER</b></p>	<p>////////////////////////////////////</p>
<p><b>Sunday, 12/6</b></p>	<p><b>9:30 and 11:15 am — Worship service</b>   <b>12:30 pm — Inquirer’s class in Rev. Anya’s office</b>          All newcomers are welcome.</p>
<p><b>Friday, 12/11</b></p>	<p><b>6:00–9:00 pm — Holiday Decorating Party and dinner</b>          Fun for all ages! Bring a favorite dish to share. Help decorate for the holidays, make gifts and ornaments to take home, or just enjoy food and fellowship. Sign up at the events table or online at <a href="http://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c044ca5a72ea7f58-holiday1">www.signupgenius.com/go/10c044ca5a72ea7f58-holiday1</a>.</p>
<p><b>Sunday, 12/13</b></p>	<p><b>9:30 and 11:15 am — Worship service</b></p>