

Letting Go, Freedom, and Reason

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In January, UUUCS began the work of building a new mission and a new vision for our congregation. In May, we will have the opportunity to vote on the suggested statements. Here's what's happened and how you can still engage in this work.

UUUCS leaders met at five round table conversations in January, sharing meaningful conversations about our congregation. There they reflected on why they serve, whom UUUCS serves, how UUUCS changes people's lives, and who we miss. The results from these conversations were displayed in the fellowship hall throughout the month of February. The posters, which included pictorial representations and direct quotes, invited all our congregation's attendees to make additions and affirmations.

In early March, Intern Minister John Monroe and Rev. Anya took the posters and, while reflecting on what they gleaned from the process as a whole, drafted new Mission, Covenant, and Vision statements for UUUCS. They then shared these drafts with the Board of Trustees at their March Board Meeting, where the Board offered a few small but important changes.

The Board, John, and Rev. Anya and recognize our congregation in the words below and the sentiment the words carry. We also hope you will reflect on these statements and share your

reflections. There will be a congregational forum to reflect upon the statements on Sunday, April 17 at 12:30 pm, after the second worship service. If you cannot attend this forum but wish to reflect, please contact John or Rev. Anya to schedule an appointment (intern@uusterling.org or minister@uusterling.org).

Here's a definition of each of these statements.

Mission statement: a formal summary of the aims and values of a company, organization, or individual.

Covenant: an agreement, pledge, promise, and bond that establishes the way individuals and groups will operate in relation to one another.

Vision statement: a declaration of an organization's objectives, based on (prophetic) foresight, intended to guide its internal decision-making.

The New Draft Statements for UUUCS:

MISSION: Seek, Love, and Serve Boldly

COVENANT: This congregation is dedicated to the proposition that behind all our differences and beneath all our diversities, there is a unity that binds us together and makes us one in spite of time and death and the space between the stars.

VISION: We envision UUUCS as...

- An enduring refuge, widely known and honored throughout Loudoun County, Virginia, as well

MINISTER'S MESSAGE *A New Way to Describe Our Way*



Rev. Anya
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as the surrounding region.

- A flagship congregation boldly nurturing lay leaders for courageous and transformative ministry.
- An evolving community breaking barriers to increase the number of individuals we serve and to expand our inclusion and representation of diversity in all its forms.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Church Stuff



*Paul Roche,
Board President*

I find I often use the phrase *church stuff*, usually in response to, “What are you doing?” It’s an all-encompassing phrase that says generally what I’m working on but also gets pretty specific when you add in the tone of my voice. I can say “church stuff” in such a way that it means something quick or a way that means boring paperwork. :-)

I use the phrase with non-acquaintances too, and it usually ends a conversation quickly, as those folks don’t want to risk asking “Which church?” (When someone mentions their church to me, I always ask which one. Sometimes serendipitously you find another UU!) But what is church stuff? Most UUCSers have never been involved in a church startup. But that’s what we are. Twenty-one years ago, we started with a dream of establishing a liberal religious beacon in Loudoun County and to a great extent we have succeeded. How? Well, through church work.

Our minister’s church work involves the spiritual care and feeding of our congregation. Our Director of Religious Education does the same for our children. Other paid staff members support these functions through music or administration. But as most of you know, it takes church work to make a church work. Our volunteers are many and dedicated. In some way, we almost all pitch in to keep the church moving forward. We do it with our money, our time, and our talents. We do it by attending services. We do it by helping out at Help Portrait Day, at the Community Table of Loudoun dinner, and at the Gay Men’s Chorus concert.

We do it by gathering hymnals after a service or singing in the choir or playing in one of our bands. The connections we make through these things and so many others are church work. We do good work here.

NEW MEMBERS

Introducing Tom Albrecht and Therese Zinn



We joined UUCS on: February 2016

We joined because: Tom was looking for a new UU congregation, having moved to Reston a little over a year ago. Therese was delighted with what UUCS had to offer in terms of feel, other members, her discussion with Reverend Anya, and the general overall acceptance and welcome by all. It is her first time being a member of a UU congregation.

Something you might not know is: Therese is restarting a previous career in meeting planning and has a special affinity for being involved with seniors. Tom is crazy about art, jazz, and classical music. He was an art dealer in the past.

You can find us at UUCS: We usually attend the second service. Therese is still working on a niche to get involved in and is going to be attending the Transitions group beginning in March. Tom is already serving on the Membership committee.

GENERAL NEWS

UUCS Stewardship Drive



The topic of money is never a fun one to tackle. Even if it is for a good cause, asking for money is tricky. Our goal on the Stewardship committee is to make it easier not only to talk about money, but also to make your annual pledge, and to see how it all translates into

what we do as a congregation.

We are blessed to have an extremely generous congregation and everything we do is funded by you — the weekly sermons, RE classes, and the incredible music. But it goes beyond Sundays to all the other days of the year. We support families in need, celebrate together, participate in community events, and more.

The Stewardship committee listened to last year's feedback and condensed our active campaign down to just two weeks. Sunday, March 13 is Commitment Sunday, by which we hope to have the majority of our pledges collected.

This year, we wanted to make it especially clear where your

pledges go. We created a narrative budget which breaks the budget out by ministry. Now you can see how our vision is carried out and where we spend your precious pledges. Download the 2016 Stewardship Handout for all the narrative budget details.

We also wanted to make sure you had easy access to everything you needed to make an informed decision about your pledge. On the [UUCS Stewardship webpage](#), you can download our 2016 Stewardship Handout, watch our 2015 Highlight Video, and submit your pledge. We've even added a pledge opt-out if your personal circumstances dictate that you will not be able to pledge this year. Lastly, we renewed visiting stewards to facilitate conversations and collect pledges. If you would like to setup a stewardship conversation with a visiting steward, please email the Stewardship team at stewardship@uusterling.org.

Goals for 2016

- > **100% participation — eliminate the “no pledge” bracket**
- > **Encourage those who pledge \$999 and below up to the \$1,000- \$2,999 range**
- > **Encourage our most generous donors to increase by 2-3%**
- > **More evenly distribute pledge amounts so that we are not as reliant on our top donors**

GENERAL NEWS

Justice Allocations

In March, half of our Sunday morning offerings will go to Meadville Lombard Theological School. Meadville Lombard is one of two dedicated UU seminaries. Their mission is to educate students in the UU tradition to embody liberal religious ministry in UU congregations and wherever else they are called to serve. We do this to take into the world our UU vision of justice, equity, and compassion. For more information, contact Gus Douguilh or visit www.meadville.edu.

In April, half of our Sunday morning offerings will go to VSA Arts International. VSA Arts is an international, not-for-profit organization founded in 1974 to create a society

where all people with (and without) disabilities can come together in an inclusive environment and learn, participate in, and enjoy the arts. For more information, contact Trish Harris or visit www.vsaloudoun.org/about.php.

In May, half of our Sunday morning offerings will go to a cause determined by our youth groups.

In December, we gave \$1,076.26 to LAWS (\$776.26 from our Sunday morning offerings and \$300 from our house pin sales). We also collected **\$565.00 for Beacon House** during Christmas Eve services.

In January, we gave \$908.41 to the Syrian refugees through the World Food Program.

In February, we gave \$660.98 to Mosaic Harmony.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Why Go to RE?



*Linda Weaver,
Director of Religious
Education*

At UUCS, 67 children and teens are regularly attending religious education classes, 26 additional children and teens have attended at least once, and 24 adults have volunteered in classes for children and teens since the beginning of the 2015–16 year. So why do they do it? Why do parents bring their children to classes at UUCS when their children and they themselves are tempted to sleep later, read the newspaper, or play video games? Why do so many adults volunteer to lead or assist in the classes?

Important things are happening in religious education. Within the classes, we create a community that models our UU values. We welcome and respect everyone, work together to agree how we will treat each other, and find ways to return to that agreement and to the beloved community when someone strays from it. Participants hear stories from the world's religions and the lives of UUs that provide examples for living a positive and meaningful life. They develop relationship skills as they interact and learn together. They practice living their values through games, role playing, and social justice projects. They consider big questions, such as death, forgiveness, and right and wrong. They also consider the monthly themes, such as letting go, freedom, and wisdom, that adults explore in worship services and covenant groups. As they do all of this, they learn about the beliefs and values of their peers and the adults within the congregation and they develop and learn to articulate their own beliefs and values.

This is indeed important work, and volunteers and parents support it through their presence and through the time and care they give to the children and teens. A few weeks ago, religious education volunteers were asked to fill out an evaluation. Their answers indicated some of the reasons they volunteer with the children or youth. These reasons included getting to know the children and teens; seeing what the children and teens are learning; growing spiritually themselves as they reflect on how the lessons apply to their own lives; and providing something important for the teens and children, offering acceptance, care, and information that will improve lives and might even save lives.

If you would like to find out more about what the children are doing each week and how you can take these experiences home, check out Explore!, our RE e-newsletter. If you

are not receiving it, contact Linda Weaver (re-director@uusterling.org) and ask to be added to the mailing list. Also contact Linda if you would like to get more involved in the religious education program or if you have questions about the program.

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.

Social Justice in RE



Children and teens did a great job of putting their faith into action recently, providing food and warm clothing to local families and helping get food to people on the other side of the world. Children in preK–grade 6 collected cans of

tuna, chicken, and soup and they met with Barbara Mendoza of Loudoun County Public School's Backpack Coalition on December 13. The classes heard about food insecurity in the county and they packed food for 130 children who receive free or reduced lunches at Forest Grove Elementary School in Sterling. By doing this, they helped make sure that local children had food over the winter break.

In January, the children learned about the experiences of refugees and supported the U.N. World Food Program. Roshan Chaddha visited the 2nd–6th grade class and shared his own experiences, information about the Syrian crisis, and ways the U.N. World Food Program is helping. Children in all the classes made magnets to thank people for their contributions to Syrian refugees through the U.N. World Food Program.

The teens set up a mitten tree in December and they gave the Loudoun Abused Women's Shelter (LAWS) the mittens, hats, and scarves that congregants donated. These donations went to the LAWS thrift store, where the women and children they serve can get warm clothing and others can purchase items to help provide funding for the organization.

Adult RE Class: The Early Christians

The Lifespan Faith Development team is offering an adult RE class on the early Christians. It will be held on Tuesdays in May (5/3, 5/10, 5/17, and 5/24), and the requested donation is \$20 per person. For more information, contact lifespan@groups.uusterling.org.

A GREAT HONOR FOR UUCS: ORDINATION OF ANDREW MERTZ

*Save the date: May 22
Ceremony at 4:00 pm, Reception to follow*



Andrew Mertz served as our congregation's intern in 2013–14. Once a beloved presence in our community, Andrew since moved across the country to follow his wife, Episcopal Minister Annie Pierpoint, as she fulfilled her call. Even miles away, Andrew recognizes his time at UUCS as a pivotal piece of his formation for the ministry. In October, he asked our Board

of Trustees if UUCS would perform his ordination. Our Board wholeheartedly acknowledged this honor and said yes! Please read on to better understand the purpose and experience of ordination.

On May 22, beginning at 4:00 pm, our congregation will ordain our past intern minister, Andrew Mertz, into the Unitarian Universalist Ministry. During this solemn and joyous proceeding, Andrew Mertz will become Reverend Andrew Mertz. Here's how and why.

HOW ARE MINISTERS MADE?

Three elements mark formal preparation for and entrance into the UU ministry: academic and practical training (Master of Divinity, Clinical Pastoral Education and Internship), appearance before and certification of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee of the UUA, and the call of a congregation to ordain a new minister.

WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF UU ORDINATION?

For 350 years, ordination in the Unitarian tradition has been granted only by a local congregation. Universalist ordination was often conferred by some other denominational body. Our Association of Unitarian Universalist congregations has evolved under congregational polity (in which each congregation operates as a unique democratic body) to the present situation in which only individual UU congregations can ordain a person to the ministry.

WHICH CONGREGATION ORDAINS?

Although some purists hold that an ordination should only take place in a parish where the minister is settled, accepted

practice today is that an ordination may take place in a "special" congregation, even if there is no intent for the minister to serve that particular church. Special congregations are often a minister's home congregation or internship site.

WHAT ARE THE COSTS?

The accepted practice is for the ordaining congregation to pay all travel expenses for those asked to participate in the service, the costs of the service (musicians, orders of service), and all other costs associated with the ordination (such as invitations and food following the service).

WHAT HAPPENS AT AN ORDINATION?

The ordination service is a solemn, beautiful, and meaningful event. You will enjoy the usual elements of any service: music, hymns, and a sermon. You will also experience a processional of area clergy, and the rituals associated with ordination. The rituals include:

- **Right hand of fellowship:** An ordained clergy member symbolically invites the ordinand into the ministry and the fellowship of colleagues.
- **Laying on of hands:** A member of the clergy invites the gathered community to place their hands on the ordinand and pray for his or her success in the ministry and especially in living out his or her call.
- **Charge to the minister:** A member of the clergy charges the ordinand to lead effectively by both honoring his or her gifts and by encouraging his or her further growth.
- **Act of ordination:** A member of the ordaining congregation's Board leads the process by which an ordinand becomes a Reverend. This act is a responsive reading, designed by the Board and the ordinand, that invites the participation of the congregation's members and other constituent groups in attendance.

WHO ATTENDS?

Regular attendees of the congregation are all strongly encouraged to attend whether they know the ordinand or not. An ordination is a powerful ritual and the experience enlivens the attendees' understanding of the Unitarian Universalist tradition, its history and heritage, its depth, and breadth. Members of the area clergy as well as clergy from around the nation will be in attendance. Lay leaders from other congregations where the ordinand has served will be present. The ordinand's family and friends will also attend.

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TELL ME ABOUT THIS ORDINATION. WHO IS ANDREW MERTZ?

Andrew served the Unitarian Universalists of Sterling in 2014 as an intern, in a half time capacity. He concurrently served the other half of his internship with our local district office, where he worked directly for racial and social justice. Andrew grew up in Northern Virginia and as a child and youth attended the Fairfax UU Congregation. Later he attended the Arlington UU congregation, where he grew into the staff position of Youth Advisor. Following that, he worked for our district office as the Director of Youth and Young Adult Programming. Andrew is currently serving our UU Minister's Association as their Program Assistant.

Andrew describes himself as a "ministry engineer," appropriate given his science and technology background. He is a third-generation UU who started as an OWL teacher right out of college and hasn't looked back since. He is a graduate of the Meadville Lombard Theological School. Andrew, his new wife, Annie Pierpoint, and their dog, Boudreaux, recently moved to Oakland, California. This motorcycle-riding, interfaith clergy couple has made this move to answer Annie's new call as an Episcopal school chaplain. Andrew enjoys anything that gets him outdoors, like camping, hiking, and kayaking. Another hobby is being a Wilderness First Responder, which allows him to keep up the skills he learned as an Army medic.

CAN I ATTEND?

Yes, please! See "Who attends?" above. There are no tickets for this event, as there is no cost to attend. You are asked, however, to register your attendance by following the link that will soon be on the UUUCS website or in an upcoming Illuminate email.

WILL THERE BE A PARTY?

Following the ordination, there will be a chance to mingle and share a meal of heavy appetizers and an open bar. Andrew has chosen to have food that highlights the state of Virginia, so expect Virginia peanuts, ham, seafood, apples, and wine.

CAN I HELP?

Attending the benefit event on March 25 or making a donation (or both) will help out immensely. Tickets for the benefit can be purchased online by following the link on the UUUCS website. Volunteers will be needed for setup, cleanup, and hospitality. Keep an eye on upcoming Illuminate emails for how to sign up.

Post St. Paddy's Day Party

- featuring -

The Dirty Pints

Raise a glass and sing along with your Irish pub favorites, performed by the Dirty Pints, NOVA's traditional Irish music specialists!!



A Benefit for the Ordination of Andrew Mertz

March 25, 2016

Complimentary Appetizers

Doors 6:30 Show 7:00

Donation Wine/Beer Bar

Tickets: \$20 Teens & Youth Free

**Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Sterling
22135 Davis Drive, Sterling VA, Suite 105**

Visit uusterling.org for tickets and info

GENERAL NEWS

Parents and Caregivers as Sexuality Educators

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Loudoun (UUCL) will be field testing the UUA's new curriculum "Parents and Caregivers as Sexuality Educators." This program is especially helpful for parents and caregivers of young teens, but welcomes anyone who wishes to participate. It is grounded in UU values and gives parents and caregivers a unique understanding about teenagers, sexuality, and parenting. It offers information, skill building, and broad perspectives on specific topics related to sexuality. Parent-youth communication is the primary focus of this curriculum, which also supports parents and caregivers as their children's primary sexuality educators.

The course will be held on Sundays from April 3 to June 5 from 7-8:30 pm at UUCL. If you may be interested in participating, contact the UUCL DRE, Kate Savidan, at dre@uuloudoun.org.

GENERAL NEWS

All Ages Events

Throughout this year, people of all ages have been gathering to enjoy time together and build connections across the generations. In December children, teens, and adults decorated the church for the holidays and created gifts and ornaments to take home. In January more than 65 people came together to see owls and other raptors and to hear about the work of the Raptor Conservancy of Virginia. During the Chinese New Year event in February, participants shared Chinese food and other treats and made crafts, such as dragon puppets and fabric fortune cookies. These events provide opportunities to build friendships, create memories, and just have fun.

The next all-ages event includes a potluck and square dancing. A professional square dance caller will guide everyone through the steps in a way that will make it fun and easy for beginners. Come for the dancing or just enjoy food and conversation. All are encouraged to attend the square dancing and potluck event on April 1, 6–8:30 pm.

Gay Men's Chorus Returns to UUCS!



The Gay Men's Chorus of Washington will once again sing for our annual benefit to support People of Faith for Equality in Virginia

(POFEV). **The event will be held at 7:00 pm on May 21, 2016, at UUCS.** Doors will open at 6:00 pm for a reception including beer, wine, and hors d'oeuvres. This annual event has been wonderful expression of our commitment to justice and equality—and is a great night of entertainment! We're treated to the sounds of a world-renowned chorus, providing a diversity of music styles and a night of fun. Tickets are \$15 and will be sold beginning in May via our UUCS website, our Facebook page, after Sunday services, and then at the door just before the event. We look forward to seeing you there.

Raptor Night



Holiday
Crafts and
Decorating
Party



Help-Portrait Recap on YouTube

A video of our 2015 Help-Portrait event can be viewed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=B2rTNP8PmzY&feature=youtu.be. Thanks to Jonah and Jackie Mills for compiling it.

Want to share something in the Summer newsletter?

- ✓ **Announcements (including those related to events that will take place in June, July, & August)**
- ✓ **Group or committee updates**
- ✓ **Recent photos taken at UUCS events.**

Please send anything you'd like to include to newsletter@uusterling.org by May 15.

INTERFAITH VIGIL IN LEESBURG

In December, Loudoun Interfaith Bridges sponsored a silent interfaith vigil and invocation to counter faith and racial prejudice. It started at the Leesburg Presbyterian Church with a brief multifaith service lead by Rev. Anya. Participants marched in quiet to the Courthouse, then stood quietly for 20 minutes and held lit candles and signs.



Christmas Pageant



Solstice Service