

Share

...the Holidays with our Congregation

Whether you are looking for ways to celebrate, give back, or find support during the holiday season, opportunities at UUCS abound.

WORSHIP:

- Sunday December 11th - Special Music Worship “The Inward Winter Dares to Bloom” focused on the darkness of the season, 9:30am and 11:15am
- Sunday December 18th - “Journeys of the Heart - Los Posadas” 9:30am service will reflect on the journey of Mary and Joseph to find refuge, and the 11:15 service is a holiday pageant with the same theme.
- Saturday December 24th, Christmas Eve - 5:00pm “Lessons and Carols” for all ages; 7:00pm “Candlelight Service”
- Sunday December 25th, Christmas Day - “True Gifts” One service at 10:30am.

FIND SUPPORT:

- Tangled Blessings – a holiday support group for grief & loss: Thursday December 8th and Thursday December 22nd, 6:45 – 8:15 pm. The holidays are filled with “tangled blessings” – joys and sorrows all woven together. It can be particularly difficult to embrace the joy of the holidays when we have painful memories. Join us for one or both of these conversation circles where we will share the many joys, sorrows and challenges of the holidays together.

GIVE BACK:

- Holiday Decorating and Gift Making Party, Friday, December 2, 6-8:30. Make gifts for the season, create ornaments for the Hypothermia Shelter, share a potluck meal, and help prepare our worship space for the holidays. Sign up online, <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c044ca5a72ea7f58-holiday2> or at the events table. To share ideas or

get more information about crafts, contact Kathy Ashland, henzandhoundz@gmail.com. For decorating the worship space, contact Kim Fitzgerald, kfitzger99@aol.com.

- Serve at the “Everyone Deserves the Gift of Warmth” Hypothermia Shelter, Christmas Week, 12/18-25. Make food, provide rides, provide comfort. Contact Sharon Coviak to sign-up, sharon.coviak@gmail.com; 202-750-1250

- Decorate our Mitten Tree, Dec. 3rd-18th with mittens, scarves, and hats that will be distributed to those in need.

- Purchase your holiday gifts using the UUCS Amazon widget on our home page, www.uusterling.org and 5% of your purchase will support our congregation.

- Purchase Equal Exchange coffee and chocolate in our fellowship hall - your purchase will help foster mutually beneficial relationships between farmers and consumers and 5% of your purchase will support UUCS.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2 Letter from Terri Rondinaro
- 2 Refugee Family Update
- 3 Community Table of Loudoun
- 4 Adult Faith Development
- 5 Post-Election Call to Healing

Special thanks to contributors
Rev. Anya,
Paul Roche,
Bonnie Lepoff,
Yvonne Centala
& Zubair Suri

www.uusterling.org

22135 Davis Drive
Sterling, VA 20167
(703) 406-3068

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



Welcome new members, from left,
Andrea Soccio, Zubair Siri, and Liz Miller

FROM TERRI RONDINARO

Gratitude for UUCS, on the eve of a Departure



Your presence here feeds my soul and perhaps mine a little yours. But even the many times, over weeks when I may not have been with you in this shared holy space, due to my physical challenges, it was comforting to know you would be here for me when I was well enough to return. Thank you for holding my place through your hard work,

and embracing me despite my many limitations and imperfections. That I could be my most authentic self here, and feel supported and encouraged to do so, made coming here indeed a refuge.... And that others have felt likewise, have made for endearing friendships and camaraderie.

Bless those here, who make music, and the choir, for which I am forever grateful to have been a part. As Plato said, "Music is a moral law. It gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and charm and gaiety to life and to everything." It has indeed been a joy!

I am grateful to my fellow travelers in my covenant groups, Thank you for opening your hearts and sharing your stories with me, and allowing me to share with you my joy of becoming a grandmother, my frustrations with illness, and my sorrows, especially now of leaving.

My profound thanks to Rev. Anya for her outstanding leadership, awesome words, hard questions, and deep healing listening all through which I've grown. And to Rev Scott, too, for being that marvelous and serendipitous connection to my past life in NJ.

I will miss Shelley's spaghetti dinners and Bridges "Day of Thanks," and the Gay Men's Chorus Concert, and our Madrigal Feasts to name a few cherished events. I am in awe at the ability of this congregation to organize a major interfaith event with little notice.

May this congregation continue to thrive as a pillar of the community, in a way that has made me so proud to be a part of it, ready to stand on the side of love and justice, embracing diversity and each other through our joy and tears, struggling to remember that we are all worthy. It is an exciting place to be ! I will miss you!

My calling and passion now is to help in the care of my 3 year old granddaughter who moved to NJ in

October. And although at first I felt such loss at the idea of moving, (I will never forget Nancy McCormick holding me as I sobbed through most of a service after I announced it), I am now looking forward to whatever new adventures it may bring, stronger for having been a part of UUCS.

Thank you.



This photo comes from the Women's Retreat Sept 30-Oct 2 at Kim Fitzgerald's mountain home near Bayse, VA. This is a yearly auction item. Left to right, Diana Menefee, Bonnie Lepoff, Kim Fitzgerald. Photo by Yvonne Centala.

REFUGEE FAMILY UPDATE

The refugee family UUCS and UUCF are sponsoring have now been in their apartment in Reston for about a month. The family has had their first medical and dental appointments. The children, Munib and Sahra, have been going to school and doing homework like their middle and elementary school peers. Munib is doing after school activities that include basketball once a week. Marzia (mom) is being given daily at-home-in-person ESL lessons by various ESL certified volunteers. She is making huge progress in conversational English as everyone who has met her in the last two weeks has noted. She has also been meeting with dedicated employment counseling volunteer to help her find a job.

Thank you to the entire resettlement team who has shown incredible commitment in setting up the family for success in every way possible. Contributions are always welcome. Please contact Zubair Suri at zubairsuri@gmail.com.

REFLECTIONS

from Community Table of Loudoun

Responses from questions asked of Community Table of Loudoun participants

Barbara Mendoza:

What did you do? I helped with preparing the salads.

Who did you see? I saw many families who enjoyed their lasagna meals served by teen volunteers.

What did you take away from the experience?

The experience I have taken away was the continued volunteer work by UUCS members - how they come together to support so many different causes.

What does it mean to you to serve at the Community Table of

Loudoun? Hunger Relief is real in our County. I enjoyed serving at CTL because I knew we were helping others. Helping others is one trait my parents instilled in me early on.

Dave Mendoza:

What did you do? I saw members of my community coming together to serve others.

Who did you see? Members of UUCS and other religious/spiritual groups, people from our community.

What did you take away from the experience? I take an enrichment to my soul that I cannot find anywhere else.

What does it mean to you to serve at the Community Table of Loudoun? I love this organization. It provides me with a feeling of belonging to something greater than myself.

Christine Delacave

What did I do? I was a first time volunteer who helped support back of the house readiness. The event was very well organized and run, and set the tone for a warm, welcoming environment for guests.

Who did I see?

This opportunity not only allowed me to provide support to those in need in our community, but I had the opportunity to meet many passionate and dedicated citizens in our congregational community (and in our partner church), who had the same enthusiasm about being there. I made new friends and shared in the opportunity to help the community. It was great to be able to have time outside of service to get to know others in our community, their interests, talents, etc.

What did I take away? A reinforcement of the importance to me of serving our communities - and in collaboration with others. That there remains a need in the community and there is more help to be provided. And, beyond everything, it was a fun and rewarding night!

What does it mean to me to serve? Being part of an effort to help others is a loving act that not only benefits others but fills my bucket. I am grateful for the opportunities and advantages I have, and want to share those with others who may not be in that position right now. I believe it can give people hope, inspiration and courage to keep on going.



UUCS volunteers helped prepare, serve and clean-up during the Community Table of Loudoun event. They even had a moment to enjoy some of the fruits of their labor.

LIFT EVERY VOICE EVENT

Forty UUCS member and friends gathered together on Friday Oct 21st to share good food and amazing music. John Kim and his friend and former roommate Bobby Lacey II shared African American Spiritual music and its history. And in between they shared personal stories that made these old hymns come alive for us. It was an honor to hear them talk about how these two music students, a Korean and an African American, overcame the stereotypes, learned about each other's culture, and became good friends. If we're lucky, they'll present this evening again next year.

ADULT FAITH DEVELOPMENT AT UUCS

Many new and seasoned UUCS attendees note that they are interested in Adult Education, but few are able to make the time available to participate. Those that do note a deeper appreciation for our community and a more nuanced understanding of their personal faith, or the faith traditions of others.

Since our lives are growing busier and more hectic, the Adult Education facilitator, Jim Illetchko, Intern John Monroe and I have committed to making Adult Education easier to engage. Many of our classes are three sessions or less, and some allow drop-ins, for whichever session your schedule allows.

In the Fall UUCS offered two Adult Education opportunities.

UU101, a three session class on Unitarian Universalist Theology ran in September and October. One participant noted: "It's helpful for anyone who has questions about UU," and another noted: "It's a great exploration of what it means to be a UU. I thought I would be fed information, but I was challenged to explore my connection with the UU Faith."

Voices of Faith, a collaboration with Loudoun Interfaith BRIDGES continues at the Cascades Library. It is a series of 12 sessions, each taught by faith community leaders, which explores Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, Bahai, Judaism, and many other traditions. Intern John Monroe and Rev. Anya taught the session on Unitarian Universalism. The final sessions will occur on Thursdays: 12/1, 8, and 15 from 7pm-8:30pm. No RSVP is required.

Do you have any suggestions for Adult Education Classes? Would you like to lead a class? Please send your ideas and offerings to Jim Illetchko, Adult Education coordinator at: jimeye11@outlook.com



John Kim and Bobby Lacey led the hymns and shared stories at the Lift Every Voice event.

PRIDE FEST: A RAINY SUCCESS!

For the second year in a row, NoVA Pride Fest occurred on a rainy and chilly day in October. Still, the rain did not dampen the spirits of the attendees. UUCS hosted a booth with Unitarian Universalists from across our region. We gave out a lot of information about Unitarian Universalism and while we shared the good news about our welcoming and affirming faith tradition.



VETERAN'S DAY BREAKFAST

On Sunday November 13 UUCS hosted our second annual Veteran's Day Breakfast. Congregation members provided the hot food buffet in honor of the service of our veterans and their families and friends. Rev Anya and Intern John led us through this special 9:30 service. Special music was provided by Kris Adams and Scott Findley. Veteran and author Kayla Williams and family lit the chalice.

The collection for the month of November went to Boulder Crest Retreat, a non-profit service in Bluemont VA that helps reintegrate combat veterans into society.

POST-ELECTION CALL TO HEALING

On the chilly evening of November 9, members of faith groups and their spiritual leaders gathered in community to call for healing after a tumultuous and often rancorous election cycle. Some came to grieve the election results, some came to celebrate them, but all came to help heal the divisiveness.

Our own Rev Anya joined with other area faith leaders in reminding us of our inherent worth and dignity and the need to continue the work of binding our wounds.

The meeting took place outdoors on the steps of the Old Fairfax Courthouse, one of the oldest buildings in Virginia, that saw the sad spectacle of the Civil War. The Building was occupied by both sides during the war.

Sweet and uplifting music was provided by Mosaic Harmony, a multicultural and multi-denominational choir promoting tolerance and cooperation among all people.



WEBS TAKES A BREAK

The Women's Earth-Based Spirituality Group (WEBS) will take a break from holding the annual Solstice service and its regular monthly meetings for the present. Patty McKay, the facilitator for the group, along with former facilitator and long-time member, Kim Fitzgerald wish to spend time with other area pagan-centric groups both within and without the UU community. To that end they plan to visit the Frederick Unitarian Universalist CUUPS (Covenant of UU Pagans) Solstice service on Tuesday December 20 in Frederick Maryland. If any UUCS members would like to also attend, please contact Patty at asheville14@yahoo.com to see about having a few cars go together. For more information go to: <https://www.facebook.com/events/580610885428801/>.

Hopefully, the time off will help WEBS to return as a more vibrant and dynamic group. If you have any questions about WEBS or helping to create a larger pagan-centric group for UUCS, please contact Patty.

We wish everyone a warm and happy holiday season as we welcome back the sun at Solstice!

