

The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Harford County



Building Liberal Religious Community — Please Join Us!

May 2024

Our Sunday Schedule
Worship at 10:30 am
is now in-person and virtual via Zoom

May Sermons

Unity in Diversity

Rev. Jaye Brooks

May 5

In this month when our learning and worship theme is Pluralism, we begin with a slogan that has been part of our faith tradition for nearly 500 years: “Unity in Diversity.” When the ideas of Unitarian Universalism first emerged from the Protestant reformation, our forebears offered the idea that people could hold diverse views on theology while finding unity in shared values. How did some of those early notions come into being? And how do we live into them now?

All The Colors

Jenn Blosser and Rev. Jaye Brooks

May 12

In this service for all ages, we celebrate with story, song and flower communion. We celebrate all the colors of life, the many beautiful ways of mothering, and the welcome our Unitarian Universalist congregations offer to a variety of theological perspectives. Children and youth are in the service, many of them participating.

Prayer Flags

Rev. Jaye Brooks

May 19

Buddhist prayer flags, flying in the breeze, carry prayers for the happiness and well-being of people everywhere. Each colorful, each distinctive, they are symbolic of all the variations present in human beings. One of those variations is the many different approaches to prayer. A Unitarian Universalist congregation is a microcosm of humanity’s different beliefs and practices around prayer. What are some of those ways of praying? If prayer feels alien or unfamiliar, the variety of ways people pray may be surprising, unexpected. Like the beautiful varieties of Buddhist prayer flags, our UU community holds a beautiful array of prayers.

Letters from the Front

Worship Committee

May 26

“Tucked away in attics, closets, and basements throughout this country are millions of letters written by men and women who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces. Many of these letters (and e-mails) are extremely significant from a historical perspective, offering eyewitness accounts of famous battles. The more personal messages, such as heartfelt expressions of affection or words of support and encouragement between separated loved ones, offer valuable insight into the wartime experience.”
- *from Chapman University website*

At our annual Memorial Day Service in honor of those who have served, many of whom made the ultimate sacrifice, we will be sharing some of these letters. Musical interludes will feature songs and hymns written during our American wartime history.

From Our Minister

Pluralism

EVER SINCE MY MARCH 17

“Quantum Mind” sermon with Rob Lieb, a physicist, I’ve been reading all sorts of books by another physicist, Carlo Rovelli. Rob and I shared some of Rovelli’s ideas on free will (the chocolate bar in the cupboard). Rovelli is an amazing thinker and writer whose ideas roam far beyond physics and chocolate.



I’m currently immersed in Rovelli’s 2018 book of essays, *There Are Places in the World Where Rules Are Less Important Than Kindness*. One of those essays answers the question, “Which Science is Closer to Faith?” It’s a wide-ranging exploration of a question that never before occurred to me but proved to be worth my time to consider. No spoilers.

In a somewhat digressive portion of that essay, Rovelli comments on “pluralism,” which happens to be this month’s learning and worship theme. Rovelli says:

“There are great religions that have no difficulty in accepting the fact that the physical history of the universe is not made more intelligible by reading a religious text or taking on trust what has been handed down to us by tradition. They have no difficulty in accepting the secularism of public life, the plurality of opinions, the genuine tolerance of diversity, and the idea that none of us, in or outside of this or that Church, is the custodian of absolute truths.”

Well, hello! Has Rovelli heard of Unitarian Universalism? Actually, yes, although possibly not when he wrote this essay. He mentions Unitarian Universalism in a 2023 book (*Anaximander*), recognizing our faith’s qualities of openness to new ideas, the use of reason, and positive engagement with diversity as a way to generate new insights and personal growth.

Pluralism is essentially the idea that a robust and free society can benefit from a diversity of perspectives. Rovelli thinks that an energetic pluralism makes for a better understanding of the universe and ourselves. He believes pluralism is central to science and the increase of knowledge.

I have one quibble. Rovelli applauds “the genuine tolerance of diversity.” To me, as a UU, tolerance isn’t enough. As an individual, if I’m to expand my personal worldview, I need to seek out diversity—embrace diversity—engage proactively with diverse perspectives. This outlook is why Unitarian Universalism has long included pluralism as a value. It’s a value that today we understand as something that goes beyond theological pluralism to include “the plurality of opinions” on other topics.

So is Unitarian Universalism a “great religion”? I suppose the answer depends on how well we live our values. Hmmm—whether our faith is “great” or not depends on us.

Challenge accepted.

- Rev. Jaye Brooks



From Our President

As our current fiscal year ends, I enjoy reflecting on how the Board has spent its time over the last year. Our FY23-24 was certainly an eventful one! We were fortunate to recruit and retain **Rev Jaye Brooks** to lead us through our interim ministry journey. As your Board President, I want to share what a delight it has been working with Rev. Jaye over the past several months. In addition to her wonderful spiritual energy and insight, she also brings a wealth of experience in congregational governance that has truly helped our Board grow.

During the past year, the Board approved a Safe Congregation Policy, updated our Facilities Use Policy and Rental Agreement, and updated our Request for Payment Policy. With your help, we updated our By-Laws to start our fiscal year on July 1 starting 2025. I’m confident that these efforts will serve the congregation well for years to come. I know that the Board will appreciate having more than a couple weeks to assemble the budget after the Stewardship Drive!

Looking back is enjoyable, but it’s not how you get to your destination! As we begin a new year, the new Board will determine and establish our priorities for FY24-25. With that said, a few themes that are likely to be on our radar include: 1) Building on our mission and jointly defining the interim ministry journey with Rev Jaye, 2) Supporting our congregational covenant and fostering open communications and positive conflict resolution and, 3) Establishing a multi-year vision and priorities that support congregational stability, growth, and visibility.

Finally, I want to offer a sincere thank you for our departing Board members. They have committed their time and talent to help make UUFHC a strong and vibrant community for all of us. Thank you to **Kathleen Mader**, **Martina Kuzenski**, and **Dan Feldman**. I also want to recognize **Beth Wood-Roig** who has now completed three years on our nomination council. I hope you join me in thanking them for their service.

As always, I appreciate any of your feedback for me after the service or at any time on my email at president@uufhc.net.

Yours in service,
- Mark Davis



What's New in Faith Formation

This month our program for children and youth will explore the theme of Pluralism, following our monthly worship theme. This is a particularly important concept to explore as Unitarian Universalists, as so much of our religious tradition hinges on the belief that many truths can coexist in harmony. At many stages of growing up (for children, youth, *and* adults), our ability to embrace pluralism is challenged; we fall into patterns of us vs. them thinking, often pressured by peers and social expectations/norms. I can't imagine there are any among us who haven't clutched our deeply held conviction at one time or another, completely unwilling to be moved or lean into the possibility that another perspective might hold merit. It's a pretty universal human experience, especially when it comes to things we care most about. Yet, our faith calls us to remain loose and open minded; allowing "both/and" to outweigh "either/or." This is one of the ways Unitarian Universalism is a challenging faith to uphold and an ever evolving path to follow.

So how will we be exploring such a weighty theme with our young folks through May? Here's our calendar of Sunday topics for the month:

May 5 - Pluralism in our Personal Identities

We'll examine the differences in our individual identities (our cultures of origin, family structures, gender, age, physical traits, etc.) as well as those of the whole congregation. How do people with so many different lived experiences and perspectives come together to create a congregation?

May 12 - Flower Communion / Mother's Day

This will be our All Ages Service for the month of May. Children and youth will have an opportunity to be involved in leading worship!

May 19 - "Both/And" Thinking

Our society often tries to paint things in black or white, but in reality much of life is a mushy gray. How do we avoid the convenience of binary thinking ("either/or") and instead embrace the gray which results from multiple truths existing at once? That's what we'll explore as we test out our "both/and" thinking skills.

May 26 - Multiple Holy Truths

We'll close the month by turning our "both/and" thinking to the topic of world religion. Some people believe in many deities, other believe in none - how can we make room for both to be true?

As always, if you want to know more about our program or should you have any questions, please feel welcome to reach out to me anytime: dff@uufhc.net.

- Jenn Blosser,
Director of Faith Formation



Volunteer of the Month

This month we again honor our treasurer, **Shawna Brinkerhoff** for all her work during the recent Stewardship Drive, especially for developing our budget for Fiscal Year 24-25. Shawna not only had to form a budget but had to account for expenses for two additional months as we move the beginning of the Fiscal Year to July 1. She had to examine each line item to determine the amount of increase needed. Thanks, Shawna for filling one of the most important roles at UUFHC!



New Pantry Coming to UUFHC

The Community Outreach Committee is sponsoring a "Health and Hygiene" pantry, which will soon appear outdoors near the religious education wing. **Glenn Brown** built the pantry at the workshop of the Oak Crest retirement community and brought it in sections to UUFHC during the second week of April. **Bob Veidt** painted the pantry, and **Bill Hofherr** put the parts together and will install the pantry.

The pantry should be ready to serve those in need by May 1.

The Community Outreach Committee decided to focus on providing health and hygiene items since these are not covered by food stamps, but are high on the wish list of those in need who do use area food pantries. These can include toiletries such as toilet paper, deodorant, toothpaste, soap, shampoo; or cleaning supplies, such as paper towels, dish detergent, and general cleaners. Marge Calvert, the committee member overseeing the pantry, has posted a full list of items needed at our in-

door pantry location as well as a basket to accept your donations.

We encourage you to add some extra health and hygiene items to your shopping list and bring them to UUFHC. Check the list to see what items are needed and we will keep you posted about the health and hygiene pantry in the newsletter and the NUUwsbytes.

Upcoming Events

- **Silent Witness “Build Day”**

Join us on May 5 after service to paint and construct the Memorial Wall and check all of the Silent Witness figures and stands for needed repairs. Please let Erin know if you plan on joining us so we can order pizza in advance. Emgallagher81@gmail.com. Thanks for aiding in this important project that reminds Harford County residents or the scourge of domestic violence and puts UUFHC in the spotlight.

- Erin Gallagher

- **Wanted and Needed:**

Able bodied, brave, caring, and generous members to help set up and break down the **Flea Market** in May.

Our Flea Market will open again on **Saturday, May 11**. This is a **huge** endeavor that brings needed money for support of the Fellowship. It takes more than a skeleton crew to get this accomplished. Tables need to be moved from the shed (and put back afterwards), and the many items we have for sale at our table need to be removed and set up. **Please** consider donating two to three hours of your time. You can come early in the morning (6:00 am) to set up, **and/or** later in the afternoon (1:00 pm) to break down. Please contact Cindy or Bob Veidt (bcveidt@gmail.com) if you are able to help!

- **Saving Our Planet
Wednesday, May 15, 7:00 pm at UUFHC**

Please join the American Association of University Women on **May 15** as they welcome environmental activist, Tracey Waite to speak at our Fellowship at 7:00 pm. Tracey is the President of Harford County Climate Action and has been **very** active in Environment affairs in Harford County. Tracey Waite has been a resident of Bel Air since 1997. She retired in 2022 from the Department of Veterans Affairs after 30 years as a clinical social worker specializing in Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Substance Abuse, Schizophrenia and Alzheimer's

Disease. In 2014, Tracey founded Harford County Climate Action, a group whose motto is “*Everyone has a role to play in saving our planet.*” She is the group's current Co-President. Tracy will talk to us about how **we all** can work to save our environment. This important meeting will give us directions in saving our county from possible disaster.

- Marlene Lieb

- **UUFHC Blood Drive**

UUFHC is holding a blood drive from 11:30 am to 5:00 pm on Friday, July 12. A good friend of mine, Jenn, was 20 weeks into the pregnancy of her first child when she received a leukemia diagnosis. She waited until baby Anne was born and then spent 30 days in the hospital receiving chemotherapy and will soon undergo a stem cell transfusion. In honor of her 40th birthday, she asked that friends donate blood in her honor. I can't donate blood for medical reasons so I decided to host a blood drive here instead! I hope you give if possible! Watch the NUUwsbytes for the link to sign-up, or contact Erin Gallagher at emgallagher81@gmail.com.

- Erin Gallagher

Still Time to Register for General Assembly

Join UUs from all across North America at the all-virtual Unitarian Universalist Association's 2024 General Assembly! This takes place June 20 through 23. Full online registration for adults and youth is available for \$315 per person until May 15, when the price increases to \$400. Children through ninth grade can attend for free with a paying adult but still must register.

Full online registration includes access to GA via the Whova event app, and includes on-demand, pre-recorded programming, featured speakers and major worship services. There are workshops, programs for children and young adults. You can network with UUs across the continent and can visit the virtual exhibit hall.

You may want to be considered as one of UUFHC's three official delegates. This will require you to attend the business meetings, and prepare in advance to understand the issues for discussion and voting; among these are the changes to Article II. If you register as a delegate, you will receive the tentative and final business agendas

plus meeting notifications. If you only want to register for the business portion and aren't interested in the workshops, worship services or Ware lecture, payment is not required but a donation is suggested to defray platform costs. Talk to Mark Davis if you are interested in becoming a delegate.

This year's General Assembly is easy to attend. Next year's General Assembly takes place in Baltimore with lower travel expenses for those wanting to attend GA in person.

More information is available at www.uua.org/ga.

May Birthdays

Congratulations to all who have a birthday in the beautiful month of May! Enjoy the beautiful weather the flowers that are beginning to appear. And have a great year!



Kathleen Moss	May 1
Michael McCarthy	May 4
Michael Pruet	May 7
Cynthia Veidt	May 9
Elissa McCarthy	May 18
Pat Stranger	May 20
Suzanne Tuthill Mathis	May 20
Mary K. Faul-Lynch	May 25
Christine Baldwin	May 30
Emily Yeatman	May 31

Chalice Lighter Corner

The second Chalice Lighter grant of the year goes to the UU Church of Utica, a 90 member congregation in the Mohawk Valley of New York. The Congregation wishes to live the Seventh Principle, respect for the interdependent web of existence, by replacing their gas fired heating system with a geothermal system that will both heat and cool their building efficiently using the consistent ground temperatures. This is believed to be the most efficient system available. They will also use solar power to get their electricity.



The Central East Region Chalice Lighters provided a \$20,000 grant to make the Utica congregations's goal a reality.

I invite you to become a Chalice Lighter. Just three contributions or \$20 or more per month per person will not only help grow Unitarian Universalism, but will enable congregations to live the values that we hold. UUFHC has received many Chalice Lighter grants over the years since the late 1980s when the program began in our former Joseph Priestley District. In fact, we received the first Chalice Lighter grant to help hire a minister, Rev. Alice Blair Wesley, who would become full time the year after she was called. I have been a Chalice Lighter member since that first call.

Becoming a Chalice Lighter is easy and painless. There are three calls per year. You will receive the Newsletter, "The Spark" either through email or snail mail. Then you can send in your donation. Or, I make the donation for all three calls at the first call, in the autumn. I still get the newsletter for the following two calls. You can send a check or donate online. Visit the Chalice Lighter website at Chalice Lighter or contact Beth Casebolt, bcasebolt@uua.org with any questions.

As a Chalice Lighter, you'll contribute to the growth of our religious faith. It's also exciting to read about the various congregations' wonderful projects.

- Kay Saucier

Join us this year at the Southeast Unitarian Universalist Institute (SUUSI)

As many of you know, Rob and I are fans of the summer experience that is the Southeast Unitarian Universalist Summer Institute, a week long intentional community of UUs and kindred spirits. SUUSI is LGBTQIA+ friendly and welcomes all ages, races, singles, families, and more to enjoy everything from music, spirituality and worship to hiking, board games and nightlife.

This year, we will gather in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, at Radford University, in beautiful Radford, Virginia. This summer institute begins Sunday, July 21 and runs through Saturday, July 27. Radford is in Western Virginia, and SUUSI offers the opportunity to enjoy many outdoor activities.

We have attended this summer institute for over 25 years and have met some of the best people we know through SUUSI. We love introducing SUUSI to others and would

rejoice in having you join us there! You can find out more at www.suusi.org. Let us know if you have any questions!

- Marlene Lieb

An Important Date in UU History

On May 5, 1819, 205 years ago, one of our famous forefathers, Rev. William Ellery Channing came to Baltimore to preach a sermon defining what it means to be "Unitarian." This is considered one of the most important and most famous sermons ever preached anywhere.

At that time, there was a public debate in New England between those who believed in the orthodox (Puritan) faith, and liberal churches, which had a unitarian notion of God as one. This was antithetical to the trinitarian notion of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Also, the liberal factions believed that God was a loving benevolent presence rather than the Calvinist wrathful and exacting God.

Channing was a minister of a liberal Boston congregation and was tired of having the word "unitarian" hurled at him as an epithet. He decided to take the word "Unitarian" and proudly claim it. Channing was invited to preach at a liberal church in Baltimore (now the First Unitarian Church in Baltimore) at the ordination of a new minister, Jared Sparks, who spent some time living and working in Havre de Grace. His sermon, "Unitarian Christianity" became famous and was printed and widely distributed. It stressed the importance of using reason when reading the Bible as well as the unity of God, and against the Calvinist notion of a relatively small number of souls elected for salvation.

The Baltimore region is proud of our connection to the sermon that defined Unitarianism and became part of our heritage. For many years on the first Sunday of May, the First Unitarian Church would invite congregants to join them for a service with an honored minister preaching about Unitarian Universalism's rich history. Choir members would join together to provide the music, and ministers from the area would play a role in the worship.

On this Sunday, UUFHC members were encouraged to attend the service at First Unitarian. At first our sanctuary was closed for the Sunday. Then we decided it might be confusing to visitors to encounter a closed church, so we had a minimal presence so that people could enter our sanctuary for Quaker-style worship. The Channing sermon celebration lasted into the 21st century but the

tradition stopped, and UUFHC has resumed regular Sunday services on the first Sunday in May.

- parts adapted from uuu.org



UUA's Disaster Relief Fund

The Unitarian Universalist Association has a Disaster Relief Fund. It's part of the covenant between the UUA and congregations. The Disaster Relief Fund assists those impacted by disasters such as wildfires, hurricanes and even human-caused collapsing infrastructure, such as the water crisis in Flint Michigan.

You are invited to contribute to the [Disaster Relief Fund](#). Your donation will be used for:

- Damage to congregations' buildings, and relocation to temporary locations,
- Damage to members/friends homes, and relocation expenses,
- Donations to local partner organizations that serve the community at large, particularly those who would not be eligible for other funding.

In 2022, the most recent year with available information, eight congregations received funds, including:

- UU Church of the Philippines to assist many members and churches in their recovery effort following typhoons,
- UU Church of Bowling Green to help repair to the church building as well as to members displaced following tornados,
- UU Fellowship of Charlotte County in Port Charlotte, Florida, to make repairs to their buildings and grounds following Hurricane Ian.

If you visit the website, you'll see many testimonials from people who have benefited from relief funds for their congregation or from the members themselves. You are invited to donate before the coming active season for disasters arrives.

What is the Flower Communion?

UUFHC often offers a Flower Communion Service in the spring, and this year our service will be Sunday, May 12.

This annual ritual that celebrates beauty, human uniqueness, diversity, and community.



Originally created in 1923 by Unitarian minister Norbert Capek of Prague, Czechoslovakia, the Flower Ceremony was introduced to the United States by Rev. Maya Capek, Norbert's widow.

In this ceremony, everyone in the congregation brings a flower. Each person places a flower on the altar or in a shared vase. The congregation and minister bless the flowers, and they're redistributed. Each person brings home a different flower than the one they brought.

The significance of the Flower Communion is that as no two flowers are alike, so no two people are alike, yet each has a contribution to make. Together the different flowers form a beautiful bouquet. Our common bouquet would not be the same without the unique addition of each individual flower, and thus it is with our church community, it would not be the same without each and every one of us. Thus this service is a statement of our community.

Celebrating the Flower Ceremony is an excellent opportunity for Unitarian Universalist (UU) congregations to express their commitment to our Sixth Principle: *We covenant to affirm and promote the goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all.*

Norbert Fabian Capek (June 3, 1870-October 12, 1942), a Czechoslovak minister of extraordinary ability, after spending a few years in the United States, returned in 1921 to his native country to found and build in Prague what soon became the largest Unitarian church in the world as well as a vigorous new Unitarian movement across the land. His tragic death, in a Nazi prison camp, was a terrible loss for his church and his country.

Small of stature, Capek was nonetheless acclaimed as one of the nation's leading orators. He wrote more than

90 hymns, often composing the music as well as the verses. Several became widely known popular songs. His hymns are still sung. Three were included in a new American UU hymnal published in 1993.

He created Religious Education classes for children, the community at large (including counseling programs) and for training church leaders. He was arrested and charged with high treason just for listening to foreign broadcasts. He was sent to Dachau and was transported to Linz, Austria, where he died of poison gas.

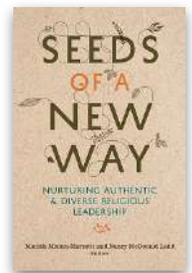
The flower communion, a ceremony he invented, is now celebrated annually in most congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association. It would please him to know that the ritual has also been a part of interfaith services at international meetings of the International Association for Religious Freedom. Capek played a significant role in this organization, founded by Unitarians.

- from the UUA Website and the
Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography

From *InSpirit*, the UUA Bookstore

Seeds of A New Way edited by Manish Mishra-Marzetti and Nancy McDonald

Editors Manish Mishra-Marzetti and Nancy McDonald Ladd and contributors explore how to foster and nourish diverse and authentic leadership within congregations.



What will it take for diverse leadership within Unitarian Universalism to truly thrive and contribute to a radiant inclusive future? The thoughtful writers of *Seeds of a New Way* offer a glimpse on how to make diverse leadership, both lay and ordained, more survivable and vibrant. Rather than presenting one definitive pathway or roadmap, this book recognizes that the specific context and relationships within a congregation will shape the journey. This book offers a diverse array of perspectives, experiences, and strategies to illustrate a range of possibilities.

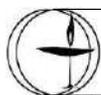
This book is published by Skinner House, the UUA's publisher of books about UU leadership and spirituality, for \$16.00. It is available at www.uuabookstore.org. While on the site, be sure to shop for other books and gifts.

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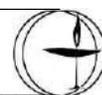
Building Liberal Religious Community
Please Join Us!

Sunday Services: 10:30 am; coffee follows

Please visit us online at www.uufhc.net



Please note: Next Newsletter deadline is Sunday, May 12, 2024



Minister:	The Rev. Jennifer Brooks
Director of Faith Formation:	Jennifer Blosser
Church Administrator:	Karen Kurrle
Newsletter Editor:	Kay Saucier
Webmaster:	Rick Saucier

Fellowship Office Hours (Karen Kurrle):
Tues & Thurs: 10:00 am to 5:00 pm
Wed (Home Office): 10:00 am to 5:00 pm

Minister's Office Hours:
Sun, Wed & Thurs: Afternoon

Director of Faith Formation Office Hours:
Thurs: 10:00 am to 3:00 pm
Tues, Wed & Fri (Home Office): 10:00 am to 3:00 pm

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Wayside Pulpit

Beware the barrenness of a busy life.

– Socrates