

CONNECTIONS

A COASTAL VIRGINIA UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS QUARTERLY

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CVUU honored for protecting waterway

Our congregation has accomplished a mighty feat this year, making stellar progress in restoring the Elizabeth River which surrounds our church home.

That progress will be officially recognized at the Elizabeth River Project's virtual awards ceremony Jan. 21, where CVUU will be awarded a Two-star Achievement Level status as a River Star Business.

According to Pam Boatwright, River Star Business Programs Manager, Two-star Achievement Level recognition is attained when a River Star documents significant results in both pollution prevention and wildlife habitat enhancement. Efforts must be clearly quantified and achieved with meaningful employee involvement and be significant relative to the size and nature of the organization.

"You can be very proud of this significant recognition," she said.

There are more than 5,000 businesses and homes taking part in similar restoration efforts through the River Star program. And the group conservation effort is seeing results. The Elizabeth River, once known as one of the most polluted rivers on the Chesapeake Bay, is making a miraculous recovery. Ecologists have seen the return of sea horses and river otters. And, in 2019, the program re-



Image credit/Barbara Zimmer

Our Grounds Team planted native wildflowers, woody plants, wax myrtle shrubs and switchgrass to stabilize the dumpster bank at CVUU—part of our riparian buffer.

duced sediment pollution into the river by 109,220 lbs., nitrogen by 78.3 lbs., and phosphorous by 24.4 lbs. These meaningful results were achieved through both homeowner and business best-management projects like rain barrels and living shorelines, according to their website.

CVUU, like the other River Star partners, pledged to "restore the Elizabeth River to the highest practical level of environmen-

tal quality" by making good on seven promises outlined by the non-profit, including not feeding geese and "only rain in the storm drain."

This achievement would not have been possible without the support of our members and the heavy lifting of three CVUU committees - Environmental Initiative, Grounds, and Landscape. They coordinated their efforts with our CVUU Board and worked tirelessly, throughout

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the building-shutdown months since March. So many people answered the call, including a handful of intrepid souls who watered during a sudden summer drought to ensure everything survived.

CVUU's total work party hours for the past planting year totaled 550 hours, including 43 participants over 13 months. We received grants totaling \$3,000, of which we have spent \$2,307.

While we accomplished the biggest changes over the past year, the real start was in 2016 when our building was purchased. CVUU occupies nine acres, four of which are wetlands. In May of 2016, the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area Board provided guidance on how to restore the riparian buffer which extends on three sides of the building. Further environmental recommendations came from the Elizabeth River Project in June of 2018, and from Lynnhaven River Now in June of 2019. Our CVUU Grounds Committee Chair, Barbara Gelzer, said emergency repairs to our parking lot provided an immediate impetus; we had to cut five feet off the western edge to replace the failing curbing. The repairs exposed over 800 square feet of soil which had previously been under the paving. Our Envi-

“Over and over during this time, members of CVUU answered the call and turned out for work parties. Not just a dedicated team, not just a grounds crew, not just a committee or two achieved this accomplishment. We all did, working together.”

ronmental Initiative sub-committee provided \$1,000 for needed shrubs and grasses. Planting started right away to stabilize this area and avoid an explosion of invasive growth. The planting was completed early this summer and reported to the Elizabeth River Project, whose recommendations from their June 2018 letter had been carefully followed. Just as the last shrubs were planted, the Elizabeth River Project awarded CVUU a tree grant. So, planting resumed, push-

ing through the summer to meet the grant deadline. Luckily, we were given a needed extension on the grant completion date as well as an additional grant of \$1,000.

Barbara Gelzer credits CVUU's tremendous teamwork with the bulk of our success. “Over and over during this time, members of CVUU answered the call and turned out for work parties. Not just a dedicated team, not just grounds crew, not just a committee or two achieved this accomplishment. We all did, working together,” she said.

Being good stewards of the environment is just one of many goals for CVUU, which has a rich history as an agent for change in our community. CVUU is also a member of the Pearl Faith Community, a similar pledge-program of the Lynnhaven River Now non-profit, whose goal is to help people of faith recognize and fulfill their responsibility for the stewardship and protection of waterways in Hampton Roads.

For homeowners or businesses located along this vital waterway, you can read more about how you can be a River Star partner on their website here: <https://elizabethriver.org/>

River Love: Balm for this time of fear

By Marjorie Mayfield Jackson

From my unaccustomed new “desk chair,” a flowered arm chair in my living room, I take stressful call after call. Staff furloughs? New sick leave policies? The future of our multi-million dollar project?

I swivel to my laptop. How are other river groups handling this free fall; the time of the coronavirus? River Network offers a link to a psychologist, talking calmly. “In times of fear, the only response is love,” he says.

I think back to the first time someone told me they found healing in the presence of the Elizabeth River. Dr. Lucy Herman, growing up in Freemason, the daughter of a physician, said her father had his patients wait



Image credit/Marjorie Mayfield Jackson

Cont. on page 3



Image credit/Marjorie Mayfield Jackson

Interested in social justice within CVUU?

(SJC) is a standing CVUU committee that adheres to UUA principles and the CVUU By-Laws. It is responsible for:

1. Educating itself and the congregation regarding pertinent issues of social justice
2. Acting together to redress these issues, and
3. Involving the congregation in these efforts.

Currently, CVUU’s social justice priorities are:

- Affordable housing and homelessness
- Affordable healthcare and healthcare access
- Environmental quality, climate change, sea level rise and community resiliency
- Equal rights and gender equality
- LGBTQ rights and ending discrimination
- Racial justice and fighting racism in our community

The SJC’s role is to increase knowledge of these topics and to encourage participation in appropriate local organizations and activities.

Contact: Lynn Waltz at: lynn@lynnwaltz.com

Cont. from page 2

in the “blue room” with a river view. He believed the river helped them. So many people since have shared stories, poems, paintings and more of a two-way love; the river and us.

I recall how I quit my job to give back to this river I love, working for free for years before we had any staff. My husband and I chose our house for its sweeping river view (that’s him in my little sketch with Peaches in a canoe—above). We left our wedding in a row boat, not a car (see my sketch on page 2 — my sister in law, Kay Temme, captured the moment). I re-read a poem on my desk that my neighbor gave me just weeks ago, of the wonder of watching the river from her window. I read an older poem I found while pack-

ing up my office for home, by Alice Jaffe. I relax into her description of the “smell of the mud at low tide.”

By the time I cook soup for dinner (lots of garlic! parsley!), I am happy. Love does heal fear. Loving the river that flows through all South Hampton Roads unites us in a time when we are too separate.

Share your stories, your photos, your art, your thoughts about the wonder of the river in your life: #LoveLiz. You just might help lift others out of fear.

This article was reprinted with Marjorie’s permission. Marjorie is a friend of CVUU and the Executive Director of the Elizabeth River Project. She welcomes community partnership opportunities. Contact her at: mmayfield@elizabethriver.org

Hardhat Trade-in Fundraiser rakes in funds for social hall

We have entered PHASE ONE for our new Social Hall! Workers have begun the demolition of walls, electrical work, and drywall repair!

Help pave the way for our dream gathering space by making a Hardhat Trade-in donation! With a minimum donation of \$20, you can proudly wear a new CVUU ballcap!

The cotton twill hats come in garment-washed charcoal or Nantucket red, with the rainbow CVUU logo embroidered on the front.

Be sure to indicate your color choice or email the color choice to Susie at office@c-vuu.org. You can also send a check - (made payable to CVUU) - add color choice to the memo line.

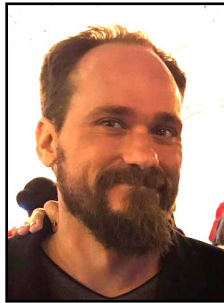


To purchase, follow the link: https://www.paypal.com/donate?hosted_button_id=4J6UJZ3GU97VC&source=url

CVUU's Buddhist group welcomes all newcomers

By Paul Harrell

Did you know there is a Buddhist Affinity Group at CVUU? I have been privileged to facilitate this group, with much support from other volunteers, since sometime in 2016. I arrived in Norfolk, Virginia in 2015, living downtown at the time. I was excited to connect with this Unitarian Universalist community (then known as the Unitarian Church of Norfolk). I learned there was a Buddhist group involved with UCN that was meeting on Mondays but was disappointed to hear that it was no longer active. I approached the Reverend at that time to see if I could re-activate the group and was happy to receive approval. Since then, I have been fortunate to be joined by many active and enthusiastic members, such as Stephane Howell, Andrew Utman, Rick Docksai, and Mike Ludwick, just to name a few.



What do you think of when you hear the word "Buddhism"? I'd love to hear your thoughts. Please e-mail me at buddhists@c-vuuu.org. Perhaps, like me, some of your early introductions to Eastern religions came through music. I grew up in the 1990's, so Nirvana was a band that had a major impact on me. The

word "nirvana" refers to a Hindu concept of (self-)realization that is also present in Buddhism. Buddha himself lived about 2,600 years ago in India. His spiritual teachings were perhaps unique in their emphasis on personal transformation. These teachings are sometimes referred to as a "science" of the mind. The idea of a science of the mind always fascinated me. At some point in my undergraduate Psychology studies, I learned of a psychologist named Timothy Leary. My interests in music, religion, and psychology seemed to align as I learned about his connections with popular musicians such as the Beatles, Blind Melon, and Tool. Although there were things to admire about Dr. Leary, I also grew to understand his issues and flaws. I learned about a contemporary of his, Richard Alpert, another psychologist. Dr. Alpert was a good friend of Dr. Leary, but they took quite different approaches as they grew older. Dr. Alpert studied in India, changed his name to Baba Ram Dass, and strongly advocated for the practice of meditation in books such as *Be Here Now*.

For many people, I imagine the most famous Buddhist is the Dalai Lama. Dalai Lama is a title given to the spiritual leader of a particular school of Tibetan Buddhism. The current Dalai Lama received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 and was named by Time magazine as a spiritual heir to Mahatma Gandhi's practice of

nonviolence. He has met with many psychologists. I saw him (from an overflow room) speak once at a Society for Neuroscience conference. You may or may not also have heard of Thich Nhat Hanh, the Vietnamese monk. During the Vietnam war, Nhat Hanh met Martin Luther King, Jr. and urged him to publicly denounce the Vietnam War, leading King to nominate Nhat Hanh for the Nobel Peace Prize. Nhat Hanh worked to develop the concept of mindfulness in the West, inspiring the development of mindfulness centers throughout the United States, including some with Unitarian Universalists.

According to Wikipedia, Buddhism is the world's fourth-largest religion, with over 520 million followers. My limited experience with Buddhism is obviously miniscule compared to the vast amounts of practices around the world. During my sessions on 2nd Mondays, we typically spend time practicing meditation, followed by a reading or a dharma talk, and ending with sharing. All are welcome, regardless of prior or current affiliation. I also welcome ideas and suggestions. Hope to see or hear from you.

Paul Harrell is a CVUU member. He has practiced and studied Buddhism, mostly informally, with Fred Epsteinner in Tampa, Florida since 2014, and with Allen Sandler in Norfolk, Virginia since 2016. Both have prior connections with Thich Nhat Hanh.

Buddhist Affinity Group
 Dec. 14th at 7 p.m.
 Details: buddhists@c-vuuu.org


 Coastal Virginia Unitarian Universalists

CVUU'S POETRY CORNER

Surviving

By Mary Jean Kledzik

If not soon then another
Spring
brings wind, wheat, or blossom:

sweet gift!

This earth needs no hope--

It lives for no pleasure--
But gives quickly when left at ease.

Much of the brown earth must
be in our souls.
How else could so many
rise again and be moist to the
morning?

Alzheimer's Disease

By Mary Jean Kledzik

Each room is a new world
to him as you lead
your father—holding lightly
the long and bony hand—
through your home to
the guest room.

In his moment to
moment awareness, he

—a child again—
follows back
to the kitchen, or the warmth
of wherever you are.

His heart,
as he looks at you,
swishes the red flow
from one closed chamber
to the next. Can he know
your love?

Mary Jean Kledzik is a CVUU member and the author of the award-winning book: "As if Wine Could Pour from Her Nipple." Her poems have appeared in The Paris Review, Hotel Amerika, Agni, Gargoyle, Margie, Western Humanities Review and elsewhere.

Mary sent a treasured memory along with her poetry submissions:

"At my grandmother's 94th birthday, in 1980, I asked her what the secret of living a good life is. She thought for just a moment, then said: 'Life is hard, no matter how many blessings you have, but do a lot of loving and you'll be alright.'

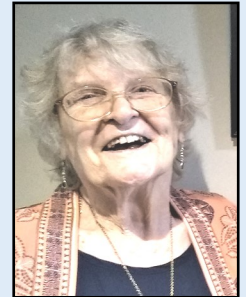
"By this time in her life, she was not only widowed but had lost two of her four children: a five-month old baby daughter to childhood diseases of the time--and a 28 year-old son to a ruptured appendix, just a year before penicillin was discovered. Her words have always helped me."



A Place To Come In From The Cold

By Sheila Dinwiddie

A place to come in
from the cold
Get out of the rain
To hang your hat
where your heart
is



A safe place, a
warm place
encircled by your own good roof and
walls
A place to put things down
where they stay – windows that close

News with the morning coffee
Sleeping in on Saturday
between clean sheets
with running water in the
bathroom down the hall

Closets of work clothes
and Sunday best
drawers for socks and underwear
Grandma's quilt across the bed
Flowers next to drawn up future plans
spread across a dining room table
inlaid with memories –
Holy days, birthdays and graduation
hopes

A radio in the Kitchen
pouring the outside world
over cooking smell –
grocery bags for a fridge
with room for a six pack

Backyard BBQ
neighbors – company for Sunday dinner

A porch lite and a welcome mat
And a wreath for every season
A key to the front door

All left behind
When you have to go homeless

Sheila Dinwiddie calls herself a kitchen table poet. She has hosted a Writer's Group at her home for many years.

Adventures in UU Parenting: *The God Talk*

By Rayven Holmes

Parenting is tough. Parenting while being part of a faith that calls us to forge our own spiritual paths can sometimes



feel like torture. We are simultaneously trying to process our own religious and spiritual pasts while looking for a foothold to help guide our children into the murky waters of life. Indian Jones' adventures haven't got anything on UU parenting. It is not always easy being a UU parent but it's definitely worth it. If you're not a UU parent you might be asking yourself, "well what's so difficult about being a UU parent?" for one, there's the god talk. Ask ten UUs to tell you about god and you'll get twelve different answers, yes, that math is right.

What makes UUism beautiful is we don't claim to have the answers, we're here to walk your journey with you, not for you. Unfortunately, though, we live in a society where a lot of people and organizations affirm that they know exactly how everyone should live their lives. This means, inevitably, every UU parent will have to have the conversation about god. That conversation is even harder

when there are outside forces affirming absolutes in times when all you can do is speak your truth. Over the years I've found that if I focus on raising compassionate critical thinkers then the rest more or less sorts itself out. In addition to teaching the children to question everything and everyone, yes, even me, I've created an ever-growing collection of resources to help. Below isn't the complete list, merely a glimpse of the wealth of resources at our disposal as we raise ethical children free to forge their own paths in life.

If you're looking for a group of compassionate individuals to offer support as you move through your UU parenting adventure REACH meets the third Thursday of every month at 8 p.m. We hope to see you there on December 17th.

For Kids

Usborne Encyclopedia of World Religions is excellent because there are links to accompany the text that provide a deeper look at the various faiths and the people who practice them. <https://www.usborne.com/quicklinks/eng/catalogue/catalogue.aspx?cat=1&loc=usa&area=RL&subcat=RWR&id=4173>

Bible Stories for Heathen Children is a podcast that tells biblical stories from a mythological standpoint to provide exposure without indoctrination.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/bible-stories-for-heathen-children/id1480175191>

Maybe Yes, Maybe No helps kids think critically about information they are told. The first half is similar to a comic, the last half is more of a lecture.

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/186676.Maybe_Yes_Maybe_No

For Parents/Caregivers

Parenting Beyond Belief First Edition https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/54170.Parenting_Beyond_Belief

Parenting Beyond Belief Second Edition <https://www.oreilly.com/library/view/parenting-beyond-belief/9780814437421/>

Raising Freethinkers Book <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/3420416-raising-freethinkers>

Raising Freethinkers Podcast <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/raising-freethinkers/id1450646222>

Relax, It's Just God by Wendy Thomas Russell covers how and why to talk about god with your kids.

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/24913473-relax-it-s-just-god>

Rayven Holmes is our Youth Program Coordinator at CVUU. She lives in Hampton, VA with her husband and three sons.

CVUU's REACH helps parents

Join us for monthly meetings of our parent/guardian support and education group REACH (Raising Ethical Autonomous Children) via Zoom.

**Every 3rd Thursday
of the month at 8 PM**

Meeting ID: 894 8637 4276

Passcode: reach



MEET THE NEW CVUU BOARD MEMBERS

Alicia Sunny Phillips—Director

How long have you been a CVUU member? About two years. I became a regular in December of 2018. In the Spring of 2019, I officially joined the congregation with my parents Mikeal and Patricia Marlow. To demonstrate my commitment I immediately joined auxiliaries and committees. I served on the coffee crew briefly, before joining the Racial Justice Task Force, choir, and band, as well as the Worship Service Team.

What drew you to our CVUU community? The opportunity to build community across boundaries. CVUU has been a place where I can bring my whole self, with my various identities. Spiritually, I am an animist, with an affinity for African indigenous spirituality, earth-centered spirituality and Buddhism. Yet, I also have a deep appreciation for humanism. I envision that my service to the faith will eventually extend from lay leadership to lay pastoral care, and possibly in the longer term, ministry.

When did you join the board and why? Joined in 2020 to serve the congregation.

What are your interests and hobbies? Travel, reading, creative and healing arts, spending time in nature, sungazing.



Rick Docksai—Director

How long have you been a CVUU member? I became a member in January of this year, though I began regularly attending CVUU services back in March 2019 and got involved in the Young Adults Group and other CVUU groups soon thereafter.

What drew you to our CVUU community? I was a newcomer to the Hampton Roads area in fall 2018, when I first moved here from Maryland for a new job. I was looking for a community I could join to meet new people, make new friends, find purpose, and be of service in social issues that matter to me. I'd previously gone to UU services at a congregation in Rockville, Maryland, and liked the people and the principles that UUs stand for, so I looked around for a UU congregation here. I found CVUU, and I'm very glad that I did.

When did you join the Board and why? Valerie [Rottink] messaged me earlier this year to tell me that seats on the Board had opened up, and that she would recommend me to the Nominating Committee if I was interested. To which I said: absolutely. The election took place in June, and I was voted in as a new Board member. I'm glad to be on the Board, because CVUU means so much to me. I love being part of this wonderful community and seeing it grow. Being a Board member is a great way for me to more actively help make that growth happen.

What are your interests and hobbies? I'm an avid reader, news writer, chess and board games player, and hiker. I also love animals and enjoy volunteering with dogs at the Virginia Beach SPCA and other local rescue organizations. And I enjoy travel and learning new languages, such as French, Spanish, and Russian.



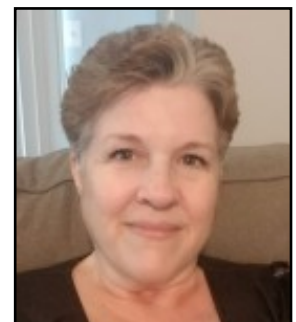
Tracy Navarra-Davis—Director

How long have you been a CVUU member? I joined CVUU in 2017 when my wife, Rene, and I arrived in Virginia.

What drew you to our CVUU community? I've seen the CVUU community "be real" together and work through it to become stronger and more committed to right relations. I enjoy being part of a community that moves steadily toward a healthy future, by investing emotion, time and treasure in building connections, programs, and ties to the greater world that exercise our shared UU values. I value work, family, and religious community, and appreciate that I feel invited to bring my whole self to church.

When did you join the Board and why? I joined in June of this year. Being able to serve on the board means having the pleasure of lifting a few bricks, as it were, to contribute as our beloved CVUU community builds its promising future.

What are your interests and hobbies? I love walking on dirt between trees. I enjoy solving a black belt Sudoku. And I relax by sitting with our dear dog and some good science fiction.



UUA's Common Read: Breathe

From the UUA website

Each year the UUA chooses a "Common Read" and invites participants to read and discuss the same book in a given period of time. The UUA Common Read can build community in our congregations and our movement by giving diverse people a shared experience, shared language, and a basis for deep, meaningful conversations.

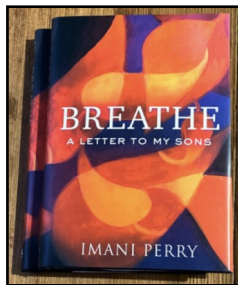
The Common Read for 2020-21 is "[Breathe: A Letter to My Sons](#)," by Imani Perry (Beacon Press, 2019).

Emotionally raw and deeply reflective, Imani Perry issues a challenge to society to see Black children as deserving of humanity. She admits fear and frustration for her African American sons in a society that is increasingly racist and at times seems irredeemable. However, as a mother, feminist, writer, and intellectual, Perry offers an unfettered expression of love—finding beauty and possibility in life—and she exhorts her children and their peers to find the courage to chart their own paths and find steady footing and inspiration in Black tradition. The New York Times calls *Breathe* "an elixir of history, ancestry and compassion, which, together, become instruction ... a parent's unflinching demand, born of inherited trauma and love, for her children's right simply to be possible."

Breathe offers a broader medita-

tion on race, gender, and the meaning of a life well lived and is also an unforgettable lesson in Black resistance and resilience.

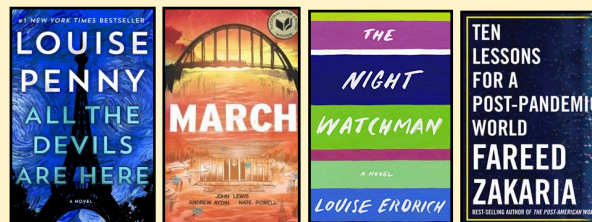
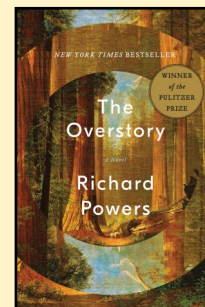
At this moment in time, we are in the midst of an historic national reckoning with what it means to live as a Black or Brown American and systems of institutional racism that have been operating to control, traumatize, and oppress people of color since our country's founding. As our President, Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray, has written, "It matters that we support the uprisings whose goal is the liberation of Black people and communities who for too long have been crushed by white supremacy, militarism, and capitalism. We must find the sources within ourselves to give us courage in this moment." In choosing *Breathe* as the 2020-2021 Common Read, our hope is that it nurtures this necessary courage. Congregations, groups, and individuals may purchase this book in hardcover from [inSpirit: The UU Book and Gift Shop](#); group discount available. The e-book and audio book (CD or MP3) are available from [Bookshop.org](#). [In hardcover from InSpirit, the UUA Book and Gift Shop.](#)



CVUU Book Lovers pick reads for 2021

The CVUU Book Lovers meet the third Saturday of each month at 12:30 p.m. for book chats on novels (historical fiction, science fiction, and non-fiction) via Zoom. They provide intellectual stimulation, build relationships, and prior to the pandemic, met over lunch and shared good food and recipes!

Their book choices for 2021 begin Saturday, January 23rd with: "**The Overstory**," by Richard Powers. It is a powerful, lengthy story (500+ pages) of interwoven vignettes from people's and trees' lives and our interdependence. It is a winner of the Pulitzer Prize and nominated as one of the Mann Booker finalists.



Other upcoming reads include:

"**All the Devils Are Here**," by Louise Penny (a crime read in the series of adventures of Chief Inspector Armand Gamache—this time investigating a sinister plot in the City of Light.)

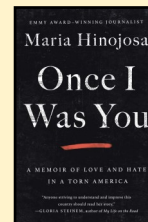
"**March**," by the late U.S. Congressman John Lewis (a graphic novel trilogy that is a vivid first-hand account of John Lewis' lifelong struggle for civil and human rights.)

"**The Night Watchman**," by Louise Erdrich (based on the life of the author's grandfather, who worked as a night watchman and carried the fight against Native dispossession from rural North Dakota all the way to Washington, D.C.)

"**10 Lessons for a Post-Pandemic World**," by Fareed Zakaria (Written in the form of ten "lessons," covering topics from natural and biological risks to the rise of "digital life" to an emerging bipolar world order.)

"**Once I Was You: A Memoir of Love and Hate in a Torn America**," by Maria Hinojosa (Emmy-winning NPR journalist writes about her Mexican American heritage as an immigrant to America at age 2.)

The Book Lovers welcome new members. To join the discussion, contact organizer Vicki Caminer: vickicaminer@gmail.com.



CARING FOR OUR CONGREGATION

The Lay Pastoral Care Team is here to provide emotional support and companionship to CVUU members and friends experiencing stressful life challenges. Team members listen to concerns in a non-judgmental manner and with an open heart. We are continuing to connect with people over the phone or electronically while we are apart. If you are interested in having a team member reach out to you, please contact us at:

laypastoralcare@c-vuu.org



Dear body ... an exercise of self love

By Darcy Ferguson

I wrote this letter as a homework assignment for a body kindness/neutrality support group.

Dear Body,

There are so many things I would like to apologize to you for. I have spent most of my life hating you because that was what I was taught to do by the people in my life and by society, simply for not being some unattainable, perfect specimen of femininity. I could say that I owe you all these apologies ... but it's much more powerful that I want to apologize to you and correct my behavior toward you.

Maybe neither of us will get better treatment from most of the world, but if I start with you, with apologizing to you sincerely and make a concerted effort to treat you right, to love you the way I would like for you to be loved, then it gives me a baseline for how I ought to expect others to treat me. It gives others a good example of the way I expect to be treated. It demands I no longer accept behavior from anyone, including myself, that does not meet that standard.

That said, my dear body, there are some very important things I would like to discuss with you.

I am so very sorry for hating you. From a young age, I was taught that to be fat was to be unattractive and unlovable. To be fat meant that you were lazy. It meant you ate too much. It meant you didn't try hard enough. It meant you weren't good enough. So, because you were genetically predisposed to being heavier, I was supposed to hate you.

I was bombarded on all fronts with images of the 'ideal' female shape. I've spent most of my life dreaming of being a size zero so that I would deserve love, happiness, and decency.

And you, body, were never meant to be a size zero. An ideal size for you is what is healthy. You are beautiful, whether your curves arc outward or inward.

I am so sorry that it has taken me such a long time to recognize that.

Let's be honest – none of us are perfect. Society has set our entire paradigm up



Image credit/ Exalted Boudoir <https://www.exaltedboudoir.com/>

“I am sorry for giving up on myself. The way I make amends for that is by treating myself the way I deserve to be treated, by doing all of the things I have talked about in this letter, by living my life as well as I can, and by loving myself as hard as I can.”

so that each of us feels lacking – fat girls need to be skinny, skinny girls need to be toned and muscular, muscular girls need to be more feminine, her nose is too big, her skin is flawed, her hair is thin, whatever. It's a vicious cycle, all designed to keep us easily controlled and buying things we don't need in order to attain some unattainable ideal.

Now I know the secret. But I don't want to be perfect, because that would mean that I could stop learning and growing, and I'm certainly not ready for that. But, body, you are certainly good enough, and you always have been.

I am so very sorry for not taking care of you the way I should have, body. There have been periods of time when I have eaten food that was good for you, when I have exercised and given you the kind of movement that you needed to be healthy. But sometimes, I really haven't. Sometimes I ate garbage because I was feeling lazy, sometimes I ate it for comfort, and sometimes for spite.

My relationship with food is a complex one. Complex and unhealthy. As a child, I was denied sweets and was made to eat non-fat everything. I understand now that it was my mother's ignorant attempt to provide a healthy diet for me... but much like her intention of grinding the will to not be fat into me because she honestly believed I would be able to be happy if I was anorexic turned into half a lifetime of self-hatred, her intention of controlling my diet has similarly taught me to have a love-hate relationship with food, fueled by guilt, spite, and shame.

I know what I need to give you, body. I know what a healthy diet is. I need to

Cont. from page 9

drink more water and eat more vegetables. I need to cut out processed foods and cook for myself with fresh ingredients. I need get up and exercise you, body. Right now, it's hard, because I have let myself stay sedentary... but you need to move, you love to move, and I owe it to you to start moving again.

And finally, I am so incredibly sorry for giving up on you for so long, body. I lost hope in ever being beautiful, and so I hid in a video game where I could pretend I was. For years.

And during that time, I neglected you, body. And I hated you. I resented you every day for not being what I wished you could be.

I gave up on you. For so long.
I gave up on me.

I am sorry for giving up on myself. The way I make amends for that is by treating myself the way I deserve to be treated, by doing all of the things I have talked about in this letter, by living my life as well as I can, and by loving myself as hard as I can.

Dearest body – you and I are stuck together, whether we like it or not. I think I'd rather like it. I'd rather love it.

So, I'm going to stop hating you and do everything in my power to stop acting hatefully toward you. You deserve love. You deserve care. You deserve good health. And you deserve me having hope and caring.

You deserve all of that. Because I deserve all of that. If I'm going to demand to be treated the way I want to be by others, I have to start by treating myself the way I want to be treated.

Dearest body – It's not going to be easy. But it's sure not going to be as hard as it has been. We're in this together.

All My Love,
Darcy

Darcy Ferguson is an active CVUU member, part of the Communication Team and the Stitcher's Circle.

Stay connected to the CVUU community!

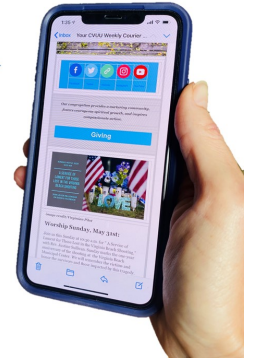
There are many ways to get involved at CVUU. Many groups are still active virtually while we wait to get together again in person.

WEEKLY SERVICES: **Sunday Service** is at 10:30 a.m. on Zoom, immediately followed by virtual **Coffee Hour**. Stay connected on Zoom when the service ends, and you will automatically be moved into chat rooms. (Meeting ID - 760 822 163/Password – 8092020/ Or dial in by phone: +1 301 715 8592)

Recorded sermons: We post our weekly sermons on our YouTube channel—
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC55afZ2NFjO22rmm6DFoowQ>

The CVUU Courier: This weekly newsletter provides information on current activities with details on how an event is being held

(Zoom, Facebook live, Discord etc.), and the steps to join in (including links, passwords etc.). If you would like to receive up-to-date weekly news from our congregation, easily accessible from a desktop, smartphone or tablet, subscribe to the Weekly Courier, published every Wednesday! Follow this link to subscribe: <http://eepurl.com/dLqnOw>



Click here to see our Virtual Welcome Table with a full list of options:

<https://www.c-vuu.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Virtual-CVUU-2.0.pdf>

Just Unwind!
*Calling knitters, crocheters and other fiber artists!
 The CVUU Stitchers' Circle invites you to join them
 on the digital platform Discord!*

Every Tuesday @ 6:30 PM

Contact organizer Valerie Rottink for details:
valerie.rottink@gmail.com

RE REGISTRATION

CVUU believes faith development is a lifelong journey that starts with our youngest UUs! It's easy to register your child for Religious Education – just scan the code!

CVUU Coastal Virginia Unitarian Universalists

Covenant Circles offer spiritual exploration

Do you yearn to build stronger interpersonal relationships with other UUs while engaging in spiritual exploration?

You can do this each month at CVUU in Covenant Circles (CCs), now meeting via Zoom! These small groups provide an avenue for confidential discussion and deeper spiritual exploration led by Covenant Circle facilitators. You are invited to join one of these groups for late 2020-2021!

Covenant Circles offer opportunities for relationship building as well as spiritual exploration in small group, private discussions which meet once each month (or twice monthly for the Saturday afternoon Covenant Circle). Group members and facilitators select the discussion topics, though sometimes groups choose to follow the worship services theme for the month such as “Community” or “Remembrance and Gratitude” to share from their own personal experiences with one another.

These are not forums for intellectual, abstract discussion but instead provide us the chance to share personal life



experiences related to the chosen theme such as: “What life experiences have challenged you along the way even though you may only later have realized the ‘gift’ those challenges brought you?”

Since our feelings and emotions are engaged any time we explore values and meaning in our lives, Covenant Circles encourage our sharing but also provide important bridges to build community and personal exploration at a deeper level.

If you feel the need for individual emotional support, contact the minister, minister@c-vuu.org or the coordinator of the Lay Pastoral Care Team, Francie Siegfried, at laypastoralcare@c-vuu.org.

Covenant Circles for 2020 -2021:

- 3rd Tuesday night, 7 - 9 p.m. Facilitators: Perry Duncan and Rosemary Ayres.
 - 2nd Wednesday night, 7:30 – 9 p.m. Facilitator is Francie Siegfried.
 - 1st Thursday night, 7 – 9 p.m. Facilitator is Richard Anderson.
 - 2nd and 4th Friday afternoons, 3:15-5 p.m. Facilitator is Vicki Caminer.
 - 1st and 3rd Saturdays, 2 - 4 p.m. Facilitator is Joe New.
 - 4th Thursday, Facilitator is Pat Metzler.
- NOTE:** This CC is on hiatus until in-person meetings at CVUU resume.

To join a Covenant Circle, contact Vicki Caminer, Covenant Circle convenor at: 757-638-0737 (landline) 757-469-1397 (cell) or email at vickicaminer@gmail.com.

ALWAYS ROOM FOR ONE MORE!

Drop-ins are always welcome! Please scan this code to fill out a visitor’s card – we want to get to know you!



Coastal Virginia
Unitarian Universalists

CVUU'S FANFARONADE

Author, Author!

Longtime CVUU member Perry Duncan is now a published author! His textbook, "Substance Use Disorders: A Biopsychosocial Perspective," was published last month and is now available at Barnes & Noble, Amazon, and directly from Cambridge University Press.

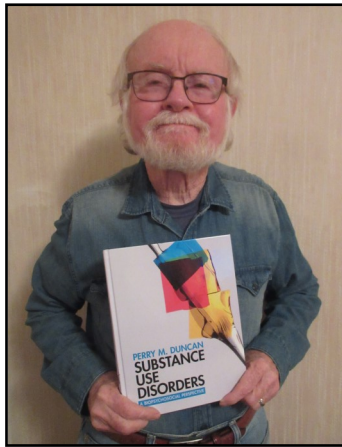


Image credit/ Perry Duncan

The book surveys the current knowledge on substance use disorders (SUD), summarizing scientific evidence from numerous fields. It uses a biopsychosocial framework to integrate the many factors that contribute to addictions, from genetic predispositions, neurological responses caused by drugs, co-occurring psychiatric disorders, personality traits, and developmental conditions to cultural influences.

Perry is a professor of biological psychology. He gave a special credit in the acknowledgement section of his book to his wife: "My wife, Dr. Nancy, for years of commitment to this long-term project!"

cy Duncan, greatly contributed to all stages of creation of this book. She helped clarify my thinking and writing on many aspects of substance use disorders and identified points that I had omitted or not adequately explained. Having another professor of biological psychology as an in-house editor and a major contributor was a definite advantage. Thank you, Nancy, for years of commitment to this long-term project!"

Pandemic inspires a favorite CVUU artist

Tret Fure, a familiar face at CVUU who has donated her talent to many of our worship services, has some news to crow about:

I just released my 17th album, "Stone by Stone." This is definitely my most mature and thoroughly thought provoking CD to date. The material ranges from folk, to blues, to jazz, to rock with my retro song "Across the Room," a pandemic inspired tune. The title song is an autobiographical look at love through the lens of time. Please don't miss my new release! You can find



information about ordering it at www.tretfure.com. Of course you can download from many of the platforms out there but buy from me please! I only wish I could hand you all copies personally.



Image credit/ Steve Daniel

1st place winners: "Cypress Trees Display their Spring Colors on a Foggy Morning" and "A Great Egret Assumes the Posture of a Symphony Conductor." Both images were taken at Stumpy Lake Natural Area in Virginia Beach, located along the city boundary with Chesapeake. It consists of 1,422 acres including a 278-acre lake with a raised overlook, 174-acre golf course, 970+ acres of undeveloped, forested land surrounding the lake and 1.65 miles of trails.

Nature photos take 1st Place

Longtime CVUU member and our favorite congregational photographer, Steve Daniel, is an award winner now!

He was both "pleased and surprised" to learn that two of his photos were chosen as first-place winners in the recent Lynnhaven River Now 2020 photo contest.

A panel of judges chose winners in four categories: Wildlife, Landscape, Recreation, and Celebrating Trees. Steve

won first place in both the Wildlife and Celebrate Trees categories. His photos were chosen for how truly they represented Virginia Beach's natural beauty and diverse ecosystems.

Lynnhaven River Now is a local nonprofit organization dedicated to restoring and protecting the beautiful Lynnhaven River, with the overall goal of working to make Virginia Beach waterways clean and healthy.

70s cult film, screenplay full of UU values

By Tracy Brune

Reprinted from Nov. 2019

When the Novel Idea Book Club (NIBC) decided to discuss the book and subsequent film adaptation of "Harold and Maude," none of our members realized how very UU our pick was until we sat down together to discuss it.

For those of you unfamiliar with "Harold and Maude," (a novel by Colin Higgins and a cult film classic from 1971) it is the love story of two eccentric souls, Harold, a death-obsessed 20-year-old from a wealthy family, and Maude, a 79-year-old free-spirited bohemian and survivor of a Jewish concentration camp during World War II.

Both the film and the book are tough to pin down to a single genre. The American Film Institute rates "Harold and Maude" as the #9 Romantic Comedy of all time, the #45 Dark Comedy of all time, and the #69 Romance film of all time.

Harold and Maude (in the book and the film) meet while attending a stranger's funeral. It is hilarious, absurd, deeply moving and ultimately endearing. Reading the book after seeing the film (many times!) made me love the story and characters even more. It was especially fun to watch it with friends seeing it for the first time.

As we do every month, we shared our favorite written passages with each other - this time we had chosen nearly all of the same ones, but one in particular resonated with each of us as the most UU of all. It was a discussion of God. Harold asks Maude, "who do you think God is?"

"Oh, he has lots of names. Brahma, the Tao, Jove. And for the metaphysically inclined, there's The First Cause, The One Reality, or the Eternal Root. For me, I like



what it says in the Koran -- "God is Love." Harold grimaced. "It says that in the Bible," he corrected. "And anyway, it's just a cliché."

"Well, a cliché today is a profundity tomorrow -- and vice versa..."

"Maude, do you pray?"

"Well, I communicate."

"How?"

"Lots of ways. Through living. Through loving. Different levels of consciousness require different levels of communication. Language isn't the only way of talking."

Harold smiled, "Yes," he said. "There's always waltzing."

"Right," said Maude. "One dances for grace -- in the theological sense."

"But, where is He? Is He inside of us or outside of us?"

"Both, I imagine. There is a little God inside us to show us where we've been, and a little God outside of us to show us where we're going."

"That's pretty mystical."

"You're right, Harold. It's a mystery. Frankly, I'm not sure if He's Our Father or Our Mother. I only know," she said, patting the trunk of the tree, "He's very creative."

Through their improbable friendship and eventual romance, Harold learns to enjoy life and to open himself up to love. His relationship with Maude breaks norms but also shows the reader/viewer that we alienate ourselves from others when we remain separated by class, gender, and age. Maude's character breaks with the usual representation of aging women in film - she is vibrant, sexual and romantic.

One of the best features of the film over the book is the remarkable soundtrack by Cat Stevens, which has a kind of symbiosis with the film's big themes. The ultimate message of the book and the film is that we are as happy as we allow ourselves to be - that opportunities are all around us if we would just look for them. This message is delivered best in a song Steven's wrote specifically for the film, "If you want to sing out, sing out." The scene with Maude and Harold singing this song together is one of the best on-screen moments.

"Well, if you want to sing out, sing out
And if you want to be free, be free
'Cause there's a million things to be
You know that there are ..."

Harold and Maude is available for online streaming at Amazon Prime Video. Higgins's novelization has been out of print for more than thirty years, but you can find used copies on Amazon.

Tracy Brune is the CVUU Communication Coordinator and organizer of the Novel Ideas Book Club. To join NIBC, email her at comm-coordinator@c-vuu.org. They meet again Jan.20, 2021.

NEST
Norfolk's
Emergency
Shelter Team

Help us help the homeless this winter. First Presbyterian Church in Norfolk still needs volunteers!

<https://www.fpcnorfolk.org/nest-2020>

Questions: Julie Hurst - (757-620-7991)
jbhurst@cox.net

CVUU Coastal Virginia Unitarian Universalists

We welcome all
SEEKERS
and
SNEAKERS

CVUU Coastal Virginia Unitarian Universalists

This critter needs a name!

Woodchuck, land beaver, whistle pig? Apparently these are all one and the same animal—a groundhog.

You may catch a glimpse of one of these glorious critters if you work on the south end of church, says CVUU Grounds Committee Chair, Barbara Gelzer, but not for a few more months. They are likely hibernating for the winter now.

This shy fella was spotted by Judy Welp in late October standing upright next to a loblolly pine, confirming what our Grounds Team suspected for many months. Evidence of these tiny CVUUs was written on the trees.

“We’ve seen bark chewed on a number of trees right at the edge of the woods. When I headed out to check the trees, I actually saw it racing for the safety of its burrow,” said Barbara. She installed more tree protectors (brown plastic expandable cuffs) last month.

Barbara says the grounds are a perfect smorgasbord for groundhogs, who eat a lot of different grasses, weeds, leaves and twigs of trees like dogwoods, ber-

ries, also grubs and insects.

“We’ve planted lots of things with berries— possum haw, arrowwood, elderberries, and black huckleberries!”

Because they can do serious damage to gardens, many homeowners often evict these critters from their property. Our plan is more in line with our UU values—we shall peacefully coexist and honor the groundhog’s place in the ecosystem. But that means giving our new friends a wide berth. Barbara said groundhogs can be aggressive, even more so than raccoons.

She has located one burrow, which she suspects was abandoned for a time when the team started planting along the west side of the parking lot.

The groundhog isn’t the only wildlife making its presence known. With the tremendous crop of pecans at CVUU this year, there is much squirrel activity. In fact, Barbara said squirrels invaded the social hall wing during yard sale preparations last month, making their way to the first floor before they were discovered!



Image credit/Judy Welp

Say hello to CVUU’s resident groundhog! This was taken in late October during a work party. The staff would love your help in giving this little guy a name! Send your ideas to community-coordinator@c-vuu.org.

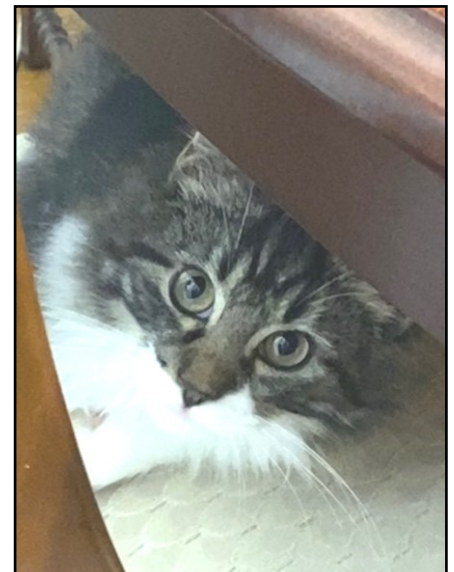
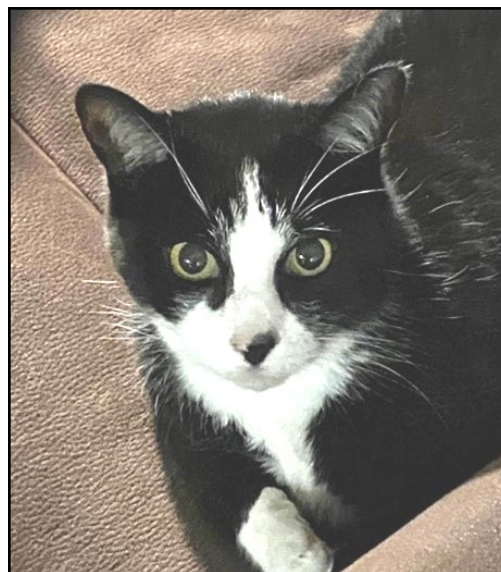
REVIEW US ON Google

★★★★★

HELP US GROW:
Leave a Google review!

1. On your phone/computer, open Google Maps and make sure you are signed in
2. Search for Coastal Virginia Unitarian Universalists
3. On the left, scroll down & click “Write a Review”
4. In the window that appears, click the stars to score the place. You can also write a review.

BELOVED PETS OF CVUU



Rev. Viola Abbitt has two beloved kitties! Meet 5-year-old Minerva, (left) born in New York and adopted from Kitten Angels (<http://kittenangels.org/>). She likes to eat and sleep when she’s not avoiding her playful new housemate, Cricket (right). Cricket is 4-5 months old, born in Virginia and recently adopted from the Norfolk SPCA (<https://norfolkspca.com/>). She likes to cuddle, play and tease Minerva.