



February 2022

## Group Gathering Policy

Unfortunately, the situation with COVID and its variants remains fluid. The Board and the Reopening Task Force have determined that we must establish guidelines that will allow us to respond very quickly in making changes to protocols for in-person activities. The latest Group Gathering Policy is available at any time on the UUFF website at [Group Gathering Policy](#).

During the past month, the task force met twice in response to the current wave of Covid-19 infections caused by the Omicron variant. Dr. John Kin, MD joined the team along with Alex Grissom, Board Trustee; Rev. Doug McCusker, Minister; Chris Johns, Director of Lifespan Religious Education, Hannelore Montgomery, UUFF Custodian; and Kristen Tuxbury.

The Task Force made recommendations to the Board, which agreed to use the Covid Act Now database and dashboard (<https://www.covidactnow.org>) for determining gathering protocols at the Fellowship. Covid Act Now uses key metrics (including Daily New Cases per 100,000 people, Infection Rate, Positive Test Rate, % Vaccinations) in determining overall risk levels.

At this time, guidelines for in-person activities will be reviewed on a weekly basis. The minister will check the risk factor on Fridays. When the risk factor is Very High or Severe, the Sunday worship service will be restricted to online only. Information will be distributed to the congregation through email, in the Order of Service, on the Fellowship's main webpage, and in the UUFF Facebook Group.

Risk level will also determine protocols for other group gatherings. When the risk factor for our area is Medium or lower, there will be no additional limitations beyond the fire code on how many people can gather indoors at the Fellowship. When the risk factor is High, the limit will be 50; when it is Very High, the limit will be 30 and when it is Severe, the limit will be 15.

Right now, the risk factor for our region is SEVERE. Therefore, hybrid Sunday worship services will be suspended until the risk factor stands at High or lower. Small groups of 15 or less can meet at the Fellowship. Every group that wants to meet at the Fellowship must contact the Fellowship Administrator Nancy Michael to request meeting space. Each group will need to have a point of contact who will ensure that the Group Gathering Policy is strictly followed. They will take attendance and contact all present in the event that one of the attendees tests positive for Covid within 10 days of the meeting.

Safety protocols will remain in place, including:

- All group meeting participants for indoor activities need to wear **masks** and maintain **physical distancing of 6 feet** (with the exception of family units).
- **No eating or drinking while indoors.**
- Indoor group meetings are limited to **90 minutes in length.**
- No indoor congregational singing at this time. Choir may rehearse indoors and must show proof of vaccination to the Choir Director.
- Only one person or family unit may use the bathroom at a time and must be **masked.**
- Group leaders must keep a list of all participants present in case contact tracing is required after the meeting.

We encourage those attending in-person gatherings to be fully vaccinated and boosted as they are able, while recognizing that this is not an option for all. However, due to the increased risk of infection caused by group singing, all Choir members will be

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required to be fully vaccinated and must show proof of vaccination to attend rehearsals.

We recognize that some of these restrictions feel vexing, and we all wish for a time when they are no longer needed. For the present, however, this policy can help promote a healthier environment for all members of our community.

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### PLEDGE DRIVE KICK OFF

The UUFF's Fiscal Year 2023 Pledge Drive begins on Saturday, February 5<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 p.m. Join us at that time, on Zoom, for the kick-off event we're calling, "Tales of Fellowship."

**Zoom: [Pledge Drive Kick Off](#)**  
**Meeting ID: 632 068 0813; Password: 838891**

Each year, we conduct a Pledge Drive to raise funds for our expenses for the new fiscal year which begins on July 1. Have you ever considered how much money it takes to keep this Fellowship functioning? Our expenses are considerable! The money we receive helps pay for our programs, events and activities, like the UUFF's religious education of our youth, the beautiful music that we'll no doubt hear again live on Sundays, the community dinners we provide to homeless adults in Fredericksburg, staff salaries, building mortgage, utilities, and other necessary expenses.

We'll kick off the Pledge Drive with "Tales of Fellowship" and we want your stories! Do you have an interesting recollection about the Fellowship – maybe a particularly memorable event? Or how about a captivating personal experience you'll never forget (something funny or something sad) -- and would be willing to share. Or maybe a song, or a funny skit??

Please submit a pre-recorded video of your story or song (no more than 5 minutes). If you need any technical assistance, we are available! Contact [Curt Swinburne](#) as soon as possible.

*~ The Pledge Committee*

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### Living the Pledge 2022!

Starting Saturday, March 26th and then meeting every Wednesday evening the month of April, our minister, DRE, as well as other members of our UU family, are all teaming up to bring the Fredericksburg Pledge to End Racism to this Fellowship. Based on the Birmingham Pledge and brought to this area by [First UU in Richmond](#), this 12-hour workshop, Living the Pledge, is a wonderful opportunity to deepen our commitment to ending racism in our communities. You will learn about the ways that racism impacts our society and institutions; acquire skills for engaging in empathic dialog about race, how to speak up when microaggressions occur and identify ways to carry the work of dismantling racism forward. Please [click here](#) to let the facilitators know that you are interested and to receive further information as it becomes available.

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### Facilitator Training

The Living the Pledge Team is currently looking for new facilitators to join us for the spring LTP class. The initial training will be held on Saturday, February 19th and then continue over the course of the 5 LTP sessions this spring. Please contact the Director of Lifespan Religious Education, [Chris Johns](#) or [Rev. Doug McCusker](#) for information or to say you'll join us!

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### Intergenerational Discussion Group

Please join the members of the UUFF Youth Group for lively conversation Sunday, February 13 from 12:30 - 2:00 for this hybrid conversation. Use the RE link found in the Sunday Reminder email to join us on ZOOM. Bring an open mind and your willingness to engage with these brilliant youth!

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### Brownies and Online Game Night!

The RE Committee will host an online game night on Saturday, February 12 at 7 p.m. All ages are welcome; we may break into separate "rooms" online, if needed. We'll also provide a box of brownie mix to anyone interested in making brownies to enjoy during game night. RSVP by Thursday, Feb. 10 to [Susan Park](#) to request a brownie mix. No RSVP needed to join on game night.

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Zoom in [HERE!](#)  
Meeting ID: 878 1919 1940  
Passcode: 462545

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**Donations needed for the  
Fredericksburg Bookmobile!**

The RE Committee is collecting donations of gently used books for the Fredericksburg Bookmobile; there is a large tote in the building foyer. Then, in March, we'll get a chance to visit the Bookmobile at the UUFF! We'll provide additional details about the visit soon. Learn more about the Bookmobile [HERE](#).

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**Board Business**

A report to the congregation on what's happening in the zoom room

At the regularly scheduled meeting on January 13, 2022:

- The Board discussed and finalized a draft budget for Fiscal Year 2023, which begins on July 1, 2022.
- Alex Grissom presented information from the Reopening Task Force. He noted that according to the independent, nonprofit, "*Covid Act Now*" website, Stafford County's infection rate is "Severe" -- its highest level -- and that, accordingly, Sunday services should not take place in the building until it falls below this threshold. Other churches are also using this website as the science behind changes they are making to keep up with the vagaries of the pandemic. Alex also distributed to Board members a summary of revised Task Force findings and policies reached at its recent meeting. The new Task Force policies were approved by the Board and will be distributed to the congregation. We were pleased to note that Dr. John Kin, M.D. has joined the group to provide medical expertise.
- In accordance with our intention to continue being a teaching congregation, the Board approved the creation of an Intern Committee; members will be Liesel Briggs, Eunice Haigler, Gae Pinschmidt, and Curt Swinburne.
- Mindy Littleton reported on the actions of the Pledge Committee, which met recently to discuss this year's Stewardship Campaign. Diane Elstein, Eileen Carson, and Curt Swinburne will be spearheading the campaign.

*~ Lois Colbridge*

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**After approval by the Board, the full minutes of each meeting are available in the [Document Repository](#).  
The Board meets the second Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. on [Zoom](#).  
Congregants are welcomed to attend.**

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# News & Notes

## LOST

A gold ring set with a carnelian stone was lost somewhere on the grounds of the Fellowship after the Christmas Eve service. If found, please contact the office or [Chris Johns](#).

**Basket Contributions:** As the UUFF ventures further into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we are adding text giving to our options of ways in which contributions may be made to the Fellowship. We're not able to pass the basket at services while we are meeting virtually. But you can make those "basket contributions" during the Sunday worship services on your phone. And when we return to in-person services, the text option will remain useful for times when you cannot attend, or don't have cash or checks with you.

**To donate to the UUFF, text 844-963-2785.** The first time you text this number, you will receive a registration link. Click the link and enter your contact and payment information, then tap "Process." After registration is complete, you will receive a verification text as well as a receipt via email. For future giving, simply send a text with the amount you wish to give, and your contribution will process automatically. Please visit [Vanco Payments](#) for more information. We

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hope this new way of giving will be helpful. As always, the missions of the Fellowship depend wholly on the generosity of our members and friends. Your support is vital, and much appreciated. ~Lois Colbridge

**Save the Dates:** Coming Up April 14th, 21st & 28th! Three Evenings with Professional Lifecoach, Marcia Grimsley. Join Marcia for these three sessions as she combines practical and spiritual ways to address and improve many areas of your life.

**Women's Group:** The UU Women's Group is taking a hiatus for the winter. We hope to return to normal operating procedures in the Spring. Stay warm and safe, everyone! Check out the Women's Group on [Facebook](#) or contact [Susan Lovegrove](#).

**Insight Meditation Community of Fredericksburg:** IMCF provides a comfortable and supportive environment for individuals seeking to meditate in a group setting and for those new to the practice of meditation. Join them at 7 pm every Thursday at the UUFF. [Click here](#) for more information.

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**Youth Group Meeting:** The UUFF Youth and their advisors meet on Sundays after service from 12:15 - 1:45 PM on ZOOM at [\[YG Meeting\]](#). Teens in grades 9-12 are welcome to join them for community building and faith exploration! Please contact [Chris Johns](#), DLRE for more information.

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**Midweek Spiritual Practice:** First Wednesday each month, 5:30 - 6:00 PM on ZOOM at [\[Midweek\]](#). Formerly known as Vespers, the Midweek Spiritual Practice is an opportunity to engage over Zoom with others while practicing together a simple spiritual activity such as meditation, poetry, games, music, writing or doodling, to name a few. Community building and spiritual practice before dinner!

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**UUFF Document Repository:** UUFF has a Google Drive where you can access copies of all our Policies and Procedures, By-Laws, RE documents, and other important items. The Document Repository is meant for anyone at the Fellowship to view by [clicking here](#), so that you have access to any important information.

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## Wondering Out Loud

Rev. Doug McCusker



I couldn't be prouder of this Fellowship about how well you managed things while I was on sabbatical. The first action taken by the Board was to increase the compensation for the Sabbatical Minister to augment what had already been set aside. That showed a high level of justice, compassion, and leadership. These are all qualities that are in abundance here at UUFF. While I was away, the Fellowship not only survived the pandemic, but it also thrived! We didn't grow in numbers, but we grew in depth and commitment. There were social gatherings every week. The Sunday worship moved to a hybrid model to be as inclusive as possible. Several minor conflicts were handled with trust and compassion. We re-opened the building safely and maintained the grounds with care. Financially, we weathered the storm and came through on solid ground. Religious Education enrollment and Sunday attendance has been smaller, but those who come are dedicated and consistent. Likewise, new people stepped up to volunteer in leadership roles while some people stepped back. Since I returned, I've been contacting people just to check-in. Everyone has been so welcoming. What I just described is Stewardship at the highest level. Even in these difficult times when we are physically separated due to COVID, we watch out for each other, and we freely share our time, talents and treasure. The beating heart of UUFF is strong! This year's Pledge Drive theme is *Surviving and Thriving*. That's what we are doing as the beacon of Liberal Religion in the greater Fredericksburg area. Let us take a moment to enjoy our success. On Feb 5, 2022, we will kick off our FY23 Pledge Drive by sharing stories about our beloved community. I hope you will contribute a story that reflects how we have survived and thrived over the years. And then, participate in the next chapter of our collective story by generously pledging your financial support.



*Yours in Fellowship and Love,*  
~ Rev. Doug McCusker

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Have you seen the meme on Facebook about “2022” being a homonym for “2020, too?” As I sit here in the middle of January, in the middle of yet another spike in the number of coronavirus cases, that meme seems all too apt. Here we are, Groundhog Day all over again. Once again, we find ourselves monitoring the Covid situation and adjusting our lives and our activities accordingly. Once again, we are all called upon to be nimble and flexible.



**President's  
Corner**

Lois Colbridge

I found a quote from American writer Claire Cook: “If plan A doesn’t work, the alphabet has 25 more letters – 204 if you’re in Japan.” I feel like I’m on the verge of needing to switch to that Japanese alphabet!

For me, weather that prevents us from gathering for outside activities is making this current wave that much more challenging to cope with. Services and other activities where we were able to be together late Fall have again made me aware of how much I crave in-person gatherings. I hold on to memories of those events and look forward to when that is possible again.

It occurs to me that what I am feeling now, and have felt for some time, is grief. A natural response to loss, the emotional suffering that is felt when something you love is taken away. The result can be all kinds of difficult and unexpected emotions, from anger to disbelief to profound sadness.

The pain of grief can also disrupt your physical health, making it difficult to sleep, eat, or even think straight. Self-care routines, such as healthy eating and exercise, can also be difficult to maintain. And that can contribute to a downward spiral into increased sadness.

“...the emotional suffering that is felt when something you love is taken away.” That serves to remind me of how much I love the Fellowship that we have created. And as difficult as it has been to endure this entire pandemic, for two years now, I cannot imagine going through it without the fellowship, the love and support, that I have in this community.

Here is another quote that I really like. This is from Voltaire: “Life is a shipwreck, but we must not forget to sing in the lifeboats.”

Thank you for being my lifeboat companions during this time.

*~ Lois Colbridge*

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**Synchronicity.** The word for the day is synchronicity. It’s really funny how things organize themselves in my world sometimes. I am amazed at how seemingly tiny bits of information that have nothing at all to do with each other can suddenly - and without warning - connect in ways that let me know something bigger is at work. Call it God, call it Spirit, call it nothing at all, whatever it is pops in now and then to point me in the right direction.



**RE-Connect**

CHRIS JOHNS, Director of Lifespan Religious Education



As I was pulling up this shiny new document in Google docs, I noticed a somewhat forgotten file titled simply “COIC.pdf” as I went buzzing by. FYI - the COIC is the “Commission on Institutional Change” and they published a report for the UUA in 2020 called, “Widening the Circle.” It can be purchased online or downloaded as a free PDF. This book is meant to be used as a road map for all UU congregations wanting to rethink and combat white-centered culture found within their walls.

Well, after reminding myself that it is well past time to pull this book out to use in my lesson planning, I went back to the task at hand - writing this article. Sitting in front of the blank digital page for a bit and coming up with nothing, I decided to visit the Soul Matters theme for the month of February for inspiration. The theme for the month? It did not surprise me AT ALL to read “Widening the Circle.” Synchronicity.

Friends, I know these are frustrating times. I know we can’t eat in the building or drop the little ones off in the nursery or hang out drinking coffee together after service. As of this writing, we can’t even go to an in-person service. But that doesn’t mean the work stops. That doesn’t mean we don’t examine our UUFF culture and work to decenter whiteness and create a wider understanding of what it means to be a UU and who gets to come to this table.

On February 19th, Rev. Doug and I will be offering a training for people who would like to serve this Fellowship as Living the Pledge to End Racism facilitators. That would certainly help to widen our circle. Let me know if you’d like to do that. But even if you don’t, you can [click here](#) to read this important report and see where it takes you.

*Peace,  
~ Chris Johns*

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PS. And hey, if you discover a synchronicity of your own, do let me know. I love stuff like that!

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### RE At-A-Glance

Due to the continuing surge in COVID, please check emails from Chris Johns who will let participants know if they are meeting in-person or online.

#### Sunday, Feb 6

YG 12:15- 1:30

MS OWL 12:30 - 2:00

#### Sunday, Feb 13

YG Intergen Discussion Group 12:30 - 2:00

MS OWL 12:30 - 2:00

Adult RE "What Moves Us w/ Rev. Doug" 12:30 - 2:00

#### Sunday, Feb 20

MS OWL 12:30 - 2:00

HS OWL 12:30 - 2:00

Adult RE "What Moves Us w/ Rev. Doug" 12:30 - 2:00

#### Sunday, Feb 27

YG 12:15 - 1:45

MS OWL 12:30 - 2:00

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## COMMUNITY ACTION CORNER

### Community Dinners



Our next evening to provide meals to homeless adults in Fredericksburg is Monday, February 28th. And once again, we're asking members and friends to make 6 hearty meals (entree and two vegetables/fruits) each, or to make brownies. For those who work and can't bring meals or brownies on that Monday, consider making them on Sunday. We'll make arrangements to get them and refrigerate them for you. Otherwise, bring your food to the Fellowship on Monday by 3:15 pm. If you can help, please contact [Diane Elstein](#). Thanks greatly!

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**Thanks to all those who serve the local and wider community on behalf of our Fellowship.**

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### Sunday Discussion Group



Sunday Discussions are intended for people who enjoy discussing controversial public policy issues. The group meets from 12-1 pm on ZOOM on the first, third and fifth Sundays of the month. Participants are encouraged to suggest controversial topics of interest and to moderate those discussions. For more information, contact Rick Neil or visit the [calendar](#).

- **Feb 02: Timothy** "What is This Thing Called Non-Theistic Religion?"
- **Feb 16: Stew** "What, if anything, is Free Will?"



**Monthly Theme: *Widening the Circle***

Is it possible that being on the inside leaves you out of the loop?

What if the margins aren't narrow?

What if that space of exclusion is also a position of perspective?

What if being shut out allows you to understand the insiders better than they understand themselves?

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Why do so many seek the safety of that inner circle anyway?  
Don't we know that the circles not only keep others out but also the air?  
What if who we are doesn't end at the barriers of our own skin?  
What if the only true freedom lies in the willingness to fight against that which imprisons someone else?  
And what if these all questions are a matter of life and death?  
Or is it a matter of dying to live?  
Haven't all the sages said the solitary self must perish for the larger We to live?  
If that is true, then let's widen the circle until it breaks!  
For as long as the circle exists, pieces and parts of ourselves will always lie on the other side of the line.  
Let us stare and struggle, fight and forgive, call in and call out, until "me" and "you" dissolve into "us."  
Is there any other way we can become whole?

~ *Soul Matters February Packet*

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**Feb 6**

***Accidentally on Purpose, Bill Brooks and Linda Allen***

Living an intentional life doesn't always begin intentionally. Sometimes we stumble upon it or it stumbles upon us. It's a process that can begin in confusion, but if we are willing to embrace intention, it can be transformative.

**Zoom: [UUFF](#); Meeting ID: 632 068 0813; Password: 838891  
Teleconference: 1-301-715-8592**

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**Feb 13**

***Surviving and Thriving, Rev. Doug McCusker***

It takes more than a global pandemic to knock us down. We are strong because we have each other in the good times and the not so good. Come listen to UUFF stories of resilience and perseverance through thick and thin. Be a part of the continuing adventure as we pledge our resources in pursuit of our vision to be a catalyst for spiritual growth and social justice with service as our guide and love at its core.

**Zoom: [UUFF](#); Meeting ID: 632 068 0813; Password: 838891  
Teleconference: 1-301-715-8592**

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**Feb 20**

***Come Dance a Dance with Me, Rev. Doug McCusker***

Verna Myers wrote that diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance. We Unitarian Universalists pride ourselves at being an inclusive and welcoming faith. But who is on the dance floor? And who is standing against the wall? We are called to widen the circle from the margin to the center until the circle dissolves and we are whole.

**Zoom: [UUFF](#); Meeting ID: 632 068 0813; Password: 838891  
Teleconference: 1-301-715-8592**

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**Feb 27**

***Foundations of White Supremacist Culture in the United States of America,  
National Pledge to End Racism Initiative***

This video, for use in Module 4 of the Living the Pledge to End Racism workshop, provides an overview of the four hundred plus years of White supremacist rule and black resistance in the United States.

**Zoom: [UUFF](#); Meeting ID: 632 068 0813; Password: 838891  
Teleconference: 1-301-715-8592**

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**MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the UUFF is to nurture learning, inspire spiritual insights, create compassionate relationships, and lovingly transform our community and the world.

**VISION STATEMENT**

To be a catalyst for spiritual growth and social justice with service as its guide and love at its core.



**OFFICE ADMIN HOURS:**

Tue, Thu - 10AM-2PM  
Fri - 1PM - 5PM  
Thursdays - Working from Home

**REV. McCUSKER'S OFFICE HOURS:**

Tue, Wed. 10AM-5AM, Thu. 10AM - 3PM  
Working from home Fri, Sat 10AM - 3PM

Contact [Rev. McCusker](#) to make an appointment

**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST  
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25 Chalice Circle, Fredericksburg, VA 22405  
540-310-4001 -- Email: [uuff@verizon.net](mailto:uuff@verizon.net)  
[www.uuffva.org](http://www.uuffva.org)

**BOARD MEMBERS**

**Minister:** Rev. Doug McCusker ..... 540-310-4001  
**Office Admin:** Nancy Michael ..... 540-310-4001  
**Dir. of Religious Ed:** Chris Johns ..... 540-310-4001  
**Music Director:** Jason Michael ..... 610-698-6896  
**Treasurer:** Ron Wasem ..... 540-373-2929

**President:** Lois Colbridge ..... 540-847-4189  
**Vice Pres:** RJ Boyd ..... 703-585-4980  
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Mindy Littleton ..... 540-288-1010