# **WORSHIP SERVICES**

### February Theme: WIDENING THE CIRCLE

Sunday, Feb 20, 10:30 a.m. Blessing Creation

As Unitarian Universalists, we hold sacred the interdependent web of all existence, and thus widening the circle also includes non-human creation. We strive to be faithful stewards, loving companions and partners in all of life thriving around us. In this special virtual multigenerational service, we will bless our pet companions, our stuffie companions, and all green things close to our hearts in our homes. Have your pet and/or stuffie close by your screen or device for a special blessing during the service! Led by Rev. Dr. Rebekah A. Savage and Carla Miller, DRE.

Virtual Service—Please visit www.uucr.org/zoom for details on how to participate in our online worship services, and for the schedule of our Faith Formation classes for children and youth.



(continued on page 2)



The Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rockville: A Welcoming Congregation

Lifelong Spiritual Discovery Beloved Community A Just World

Volume LXV, Number 3 February 16, 2022 Editor & Publisher: Adrian L. H. Graham



# **A Note From Your Minister**

About Pandemic Ministry, Worship, and Programming by the Rev. Dr. Rebekah A. Savage

In a word, everything is HARD! Right now your Board, leaders, and I are all watching and following the expert guidance and projections regarding resuming multi-platform worship and programming at UUCR. We are balancing safety for ourselves and our loved ones with the comfort and reassurance we feel of being in person. We are balancing the science and emerging data regarding the variants and what this means for larger gatherings. Please know that we are truly trying our best to navigate these unchartered waters, and being as responsive as possible, and striving to keep each other safe. Please return to our website and all of the modalities of communication to stay in touch regarding our plans. And we ask, with deeply humble hearts, for your grace and understanding as we hold multiple perspectives, comfort levels, and the realities of pandemic life in balance. We love you, we care about you...and it will get better. Your flexibility and patience are beyond blessings to us, and we thank you for all of the ways that you have shown up at UUCR, at worship, for programs, for service and extending of care to each other. That is what makes UUCR a special spiritual community: You.

(Read more reflections from your minister beginning on page 6.)

Quest deadline: **Thursday, April 28, 2022** at 8:00 p.m., for mailing on May 11, 2022. Email queries and possible submissions to <u>quest@uucr.org</u>.

# Quest

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rockville 100 Welsh Park Drive Rockville, MD 20850 301-762-7666 UUCR@UUCR.ORG WWW.UUCR.ORG

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**Sunday, February 27, 10:30 a.m.** *Widening Our Faith* 

We conclude our journey through the spiritual theme of Widening the Circle with reflections from UUCR members. Led by **Ministerial Intern Kirk Freeman.** 

**Multiplatform Gatherings**—Please visit <u>www.uucr.org/zoom</u> for details on how to participate in our online worship services, to register for in-person worship, and for the schedule of our Faith Formation classes for children and youth.

> March Theme: FAITH Sunday Service Leaders:

3/6 Rev. Rebekah 3/13 Rev. Rebekah (Canvass Sunday) 3/20 Rev. Rebekah (Spring Equinox) 3/27 TBD

> **April Theme: AWAKENING** Sunday Service Leaders:

4/3 Youth Service & Spring Membership Sunday 4/10 Rev. Rebekah
4/17 Rev. Rebekah & Kirk Freeman (Easter Sunday) 4/24 Rev. Rebekah (Earth Day)

> May Theme: BEAUTY Sunday Service Leaders:

5/1 Bridging Service 5/8 Tiara Sunday (Mother's Day) 5/15 Worship Arts Team 5/22 TBD (Annual Meeting) 5/29 Rev. Rebekah (Legacy Sunday & Memorial Day)





February 16, 2022

# FAITH FORMATION

# Widening the Circle in Family Faith Formation with the new "Circle of Beloveds" Program

by Carla Miller, Director of Religious Education

In this transitional and transformational time in UUism and in our country, UU religious education is enthusiastically embracing the joyful hope of widening the circle of inclusion and celebration of our diverse identities!

Here at UUCR, our Family Faith Formation Team and a small group of dedicated parents are forming an emerging "8th Principle Team," with the goal of more fully integrating the charge of the 8th Principle into all that we do in religious education, "to accountably dismantle racism and oppression in ourselves and our institutions." We are seeking ways to provide a formative experience of anti-racist, anti-oppressive education for our children, our youth, and ourselves.



In considering what was needed to support this growth in our program, the group longed for a lifespan faith development resource with resources for all age groups focused on race, ethnicity and identity, following a similar model to Our Whole Lives sexuality education. And we are very excited to have found one!

We have only just obtained this new curriculum resource, *Circle of Beloveds*, and have only been able to take the first look as I write this, but it appears to hold great potential for developing a greater anti-racist, anti-oppressive emphasis within our faith formation program. It's aims are racial and ethnic identity development and building an anti-racist, multi-cultural religious foundation. It provides age-appropriate sessions for elementary-aged children and a separate unit of sessions for youth.

This program could move us into an exciting transition from incremental progress, to a transformative wave of change in our work in R.E. It's implementation will take time, leadership, learning and preparation. This work will require a committed, thoughtful and diverse planning team, and welltrained facilitators. We will need to proceed mindfully in this work together and with our children and youth; mindful of the potential for harm as well as the potential for bold, beautiful progress on our journey toward Beloved Community.

If you are interested in engaging with our anti-racist, anti-oppressive work in family faith formation, please contact me at <u>cmiller@uucr.org</u> to apply for a position on the team. This will be a process of application as we seek to find the place where your skills, experience and interest will best serve the community and fulfill your own needs. We will be seeking to form a well- balanced leadership team with a variety of experience and perspectives.

Beginning to use this curriculum will be slower due to the pandemic, but in the end we may profit from having had the time for a slow, thoughtful, start into such vitally important work with our young people. The energy for action in anti-racist, anti-oppressive work from our faith formation families hold the potential to move us from incremental, though significant, change to a transformational leap forward!

The families of UUCR are ready and willing to engage in this sensitive, challenging, joyful and generative work. We can do this work together thoughtfully, with grace and love, knowing that we will stumble along the path, but continue moving forward toward Beloved Community; widening the circle.

# FAITH FORMATION

### **New2UU Begins**

by Adrian Graham, Director of Communications & Membership

All newcomers to UUCR—especially those new to Unitarian Universalism—are warmly invited to join me for the upcoming New2UU class which will be held at 10:00 a.m. on four consecutive Saturdays beginning February 26. Meet other new folks, forge deeper connections, and explore the history, theology, and practices of our shared chosen faith tradition. Engage your *faith* and *awaken* to the *beauty* of the promise of Unitarian Universalism! Those completing all four sessions may be invited to join UUCR as members, though membership is not a required outcome for taking the class if you just want to learn more for now. If you have any questions or if you would like to register for the class, check our regular e-communications for details or send me an email at <u>agraham@uucr.org</u>.



# SHARING THE MINISTRY



### **Occasional Angels**

by Sharon Fitzpatrick, Pastoral Care Team

### Your Fellow Congregants Could Use Your Help!

You would like to provide some caring attention to individuals in our UUCR community, but perhaps you don't have much time, or you don't want to attend more meetings. We hope we have the answer for you.

The Pastoral Care Team has launched a program called "Occasional Angels." You can pledge as little as an hour or two occasionally to give someone a ride, make a phone call or run an errand. Our ministerial intern, Kirk Freeman, has developed a form to make volunteering easy.

Take a look at <u>tinyurl.com/UUCR-angels</u> and see if you might be able to help.

### Spotlight On...

by Sarah Jebian, Director of Music & Arts

Every morning, I wake up a little before the sun rises and look out the french doors that connect my bedroom to the outside garden area in our new backyard. I watch as the sky gradually lightens through the branches of the palm trees and other foliage. Sometimes, I crack the door open a bit so I can listen to the sounds of birds waking up and the gentle gurgling of the fountain attached to the goldfish pond. The house is silent except for my heartbeat and the occasional soft snore from my dog who is not an early riser. There is almost always a breath of wind that stirs the leaves of the palms and ferns. It looks like a place out of time. I can almost imagine that I'm not in a brick and mortar house, warm and toasty in my bed, but waking up in the wild, needing to start a fire to keep warm in the chilly morning. It never fails to take my breath away - this quiet, unassuming beauty of the sunrise. It is a holy time.



I've lived in this new house for two months now. I'm still not unpacked and probably won't be for a while. There is chaos nearly everywhere I look, but for this brief quiet time in the morning, none of that matters. It's just me, the dog, the fish, the fountain, the trees and the sky. Talk about beauty. Talk about awakening to something sacred.

I was speaking with my voice teacher about feeling selfish when I make time to practice. There are so many things demanding my attention and it's difficult for me to say "No, my needs are more important right now." I think this is a common issue for many mothers my age. My teacher said to me, "Reframe. What if taking this time to practice your craft, to play the piano, to use your voice, to (re)discover your inner artist isn't *selfish* but helping you to become more **Self-ish** - more of who you are meant to be." Do you see the distinction?

So, this last week, I decided to follow her advice and reframe. Now, after I watch the sun rise, I shuffle to the kitchen, make my Earl Grey tea with coconut cream and vanilla and head to my music room where I try to become more **Self-ish**. I play scales and I curse a lot because my fingers are weak and clumsy but I play anyway and remind myself to sloooooow down. After I'm finished practicing my piano skills, I play a song. Right now I'm working on the Bach/Gounod *Ave Maria*. I used to be able to play it by memory when I was much younger. It's slowly coming back, caressing my cheek like an old friend. Good lord, what a beautiful song. Then I start running through my vocal exercises. They are both boring and challenging because I'm learning new skills and right now, I'm too tense. Nothing is working right and I'm frustrated. But I sing anyway and remind myself to slooooooow down. It takes the time it takes. Just like the sunrise. And the payoff will be huge if I am patient enough to do the work. After my voice gets tired, I switch to practicing the guitar. I've always wanted to learn how to play so I bought myself a beginner instrument (meaning it didn't cost me \$2000) and a beginner book and I can play a very simple Ode to Joy now! Yes! How fitting! My fingers are still weak and clumsy and I'm building calluses on my fingertips but every morning, I play a little and I'm learning. I have no choice but to go slow. I have no choice but to take my time.

I am practicing. I am practicing faith that if I keep showing up and doing the work, progress must follow. I am opening my eyes to beauty. How can I help it when the first thing my eyes see when they open is paradise? I am awakening to my own self. I am becoming more **Self-ish**. May you find your own sunrise and may you too become **Self-ish**.

### Sarah

### Faith. Awakening. Beauty.

by Rev. Dr. Rebekah A. Savage

#### Dear Beloved UUCR Community,

Recently, I traveled to Baltimore to visit the American Visionary Art Museum, which is described as "the nation's official museum for self-taught art." Each visit is like an exploration into the artist's own private world and how they make sense of the outside world through their own unique expression and creativity. The art is surprising, sometimes raw and always inspiring. My most recent visit was just that—surprising, raw, and inspiring—in exploring the exhibit, "Healing and the Art of Compassion (and the Lack Thereof!)" From tender expressions of maternal love, love between spouses and in families, and love for our neighbors to the beauty of compassion for animals and creation, and conversely, searing images of racial and ethic violence, the collection of artists put our humanity, in all of its realness, on full display. And the quote "Let us become Masters of Harmlessness and Practitioners of Unjustifiable Kindness" is emblazoned across the wall in the main room, right below some of the most emotionally challenging images and ideas.

"Let us become Masters of Harmlessness and Practitioners of Unjustifiable Kindness" ~Anonymous

I ponder how this quote relates to our upcoming themes for the next few months: Faith, Awakening, and Beauty. Our faith is a beacon and a bedrock. Something we aspire to daily and return to for comfort and connection. Our faith is grounded in "service is our prayer" and practicing courageous love for ourselves with compassion and easing of shame, for others with radical hospitality, for the wider world and all of creation with our clamoring for justice and a deeper sense of interconnectedness as a spiritual practice. Thus, we move towards Awakening - awakening to a greater compassion; Awakening to the stark reality that we truly are all sparks of the divine and that together, we form a woven tapestry of life and humanity. Awakening to embrace that what we do, where we live, work and shop all make a difference, and how we treat each other matters. Deeply matters. Awakening to the endless possibilities of a world that could be, and it is ours to make it so. Even if it is in small ways. Like becoming a master of harmlessness and a routine practitioner of unjustifiable kindness. Because that is where Beauty comes in. When we practice courageous love, when we practice harmlessness and reduce our carbon footprint, reduce our need to be right or in control, give up feeling entitled to this or that, beauty emerges. The softer, gentler way of Beauty as a way of being. Can you feel that? Can you harness the journey from faith to awakening to ... Beauty! as a meaningful spiritual practice and way of being in the world? In these chaotic, desperate times of unfathomable separation, grief and loss as an invitation to a deeper way of being? A more mindful and connected place that our world so desperately needs? To be a person of faith means that we acknowledge that how we live is vitally important. Each drop in the bucket is one more drop towards a tsunami of change and transformation that our world so needs in order to restore balance. To restore morality built on interdependence, to restore love and compassion as our guide. To restore sanity and equanimity as our guideposts and communal values. I know this, I can feel this when we are together or when I behold the justice and spiritual work of this congregation. It is inspiring and humbling all in the same breath.

(continued on page 7)

(Faith...continued from page 6)

There was another take away from my last visit to the American Visionary Art Museum, a simple poster in the wall that read: "The Alphabet of the Heart, beginning with the C of Compassion":

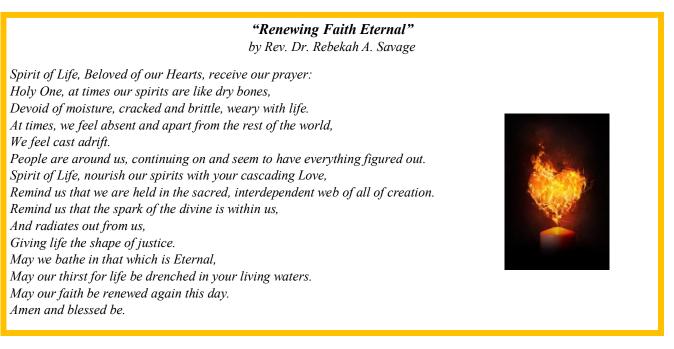
C- Compassion - To have compassion for self and others D - Dignity - To recognize the dignity of every human E - Equanimity - Having evenness of temperament regardless of one's situation F - Forgiveness - Understanding that without forgiveness to the other that one is poisoning themselves with negative emotions G - Gratitude: Appreciating what one has and having gratitude for being alive H - Humility - Respecting the other and appreciating that each of us is important and unique I - Integrity - Realizing that our values and our integrity define our humanity J - Justice - Our responsibility to demand justice and fairness for others especially the most vulnerable K - Kindness - Caring for another independent of whether they are suffering L - Love - Unconditional love without judgment

I found myself tearing up reading these words. Compassion, dignity, equanimity, forgiveness... Love. If ever there was a UU credo statement broken down into letters, the Alphabet of the Heart, it is this. And this is what I pray and wish for you: may you know and feel the depths of your own compassion that brings about beauty. May you forgive yourself and forgive others as easily as you breathe. May shame and guilt be loosened from your spirit, so you may arise as the full blessed gift that you are. May the Spirit of Life and Love surround you and hold you close, and may you always know and move from a place of knowing that You are Loved, you are Beloved and what you do, think, say, feel and what you invest in with your time, talent and treasure all make a difference, as your spiritual legacy in your lifetime and in the lifetimes of those who will come after us.

Amen, blessed be and may our lives preach louder than our lips.

In Faith and Love,





### **UUCR's Landscape Is a Beautiful Winter Get-away**

by Irene Eckstrand, Landscaping Group

UUCR is blessed with lovely grounds—quiet spots to sit in reflection, fields to play with children and pets, gardens that bloom beautifully most of the year, and homes for wildlife all year long. If you haven't walked around the landscape, let us invite you to do so. All around the property, there are lovely, interesting, and curious spaces and plants for you to enjoy.

You'll see that several dead trees have been removed this year and that four new trees—two swamp oaks and two redbuds—have been planted just below the main parking lot. They will help with water management as well as providing shade, habitat, and beauty.

Walk through the Memorial Garden, just down the hill from the sanctuary. Sit on one of the newly-refinished benches and enjoy the sights and sounds of the garden.

There are new plants in the circle garden in front of the sanctuary and in other spaces around the UUCR buildings. They are largely dormant now, but imagine them bursting with color in the spring. Likely, you'll also find some weeds, and you may even see something that needs "fixing." If you know for sure that a plant is a weed (think stiltgrass, garlic mustard, porcelain berry, or mile-a-minute), feel free to pull it up. If you are unsure, please leave it for the gardeners to deal with.

If you see something that needs to be fixed (think a broken tree limb or an empty spot you'd like to fill with something from your home garden), let us know. Please don't try to fix things on your own. We want to avoid injuries, invasive plants, and "fixes" that create unexpected problems.

We invite you to enjoy the UUCR grounds. Bring your dog and a ball for a game of fetch. Bring children and see the winter gardens through their eyes. Bring a partner or friend for a quiet stroll. Or come by yourself for a few moments of peace and reflection.

The Landscaping Group Irene Eckstrand, Barbara Harrison, Mary Lanigan, Sue Hedges, and Jaime Chao



# **CONGREGATION WORKS**

### Honoring Dr. Roger Estep, Founder of UUCR's Legacy Society

by Sharrill Dittmann, Chair, Planned Giving Committee

It is with great sadness that I remember the life of a dear colleague and friend, Dr. Roger Estep. Roger brought his fundraising skills to UUCR, gleaned as Vice President of Howard University's Relations and Development Program. When Roger arrived, we had a modest Endowment Fund of about \$30,000 that was dormant. Roger reactivated it and really got it running with a lot of personal approaches and hard work. He was passionate.

Roger created an enduring Endowment program overseen by a Planned Giving Committee he created. He also started UUCR's Legacy Society to encourage congregants to remember UUCR in their wills. From this humble start, UUCR's Endowment now stands at \$660,000.

As the current Planned Giving Chair, I encourage all of you to make a contribution to our Endowment Fund in Roger's name (write Endowment Fund on the check byline). Your generosity will be gratefully received, and Roger's son, Frederick, will be notified of your donation.

Please listen to Roger's words that he published in Quest in 2006 when he created UUCR's Legacy Society.

### Legacies ... Endless Sharing

Many, if not most, UUs do not believe in an afterlife. Rather than freeing us to do as we wish, this means that we must do the best we can during this life time. What we leave behind is our legacy.

We all leave legacies - some are intentional, some are not. Legacies include our children, our estates, our friends, our works, our love. Your legacy bequest to the UUCR Endowment Fund helps us meet new challenges and serve the next generations of UU's. We welcome gifts and bequests of any amount.

Annually, we gather to acknowledge the importance of legacy, and members of the Legacy Society are honored annually during Legacy Sunday. It costs nothing to join this Society. Your pledged amount comes from your estate, not your pocket. The only requirement for membership is that you care about UUCR and its role in shaping society's values and that you demonstrate that care by making a bequest to UUCR in your estate or a gift to the Endowment or other Fund at or above a specified amount. That's it!

If you have questions about the Legacy Society, please contact the Planned Giving Committee at <u>planned-giving@uucr.org</u>.



# ANNUAL CANVASS

### **TOGETHER AS ONE WHEREVER WE ARE:**

The UUCR Canvass

by Richard Stolz, Canvass Chair



"But I know, somehow, that only when it is dark enough can you see the stars." —Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

It has been a tough year for too many of us. Two years and almost three, really. And where do we stand now? We stand Together. Wherever.

This article is supposed to inspire you to participate in the annual canvass by making a pledge. And I'll get to that, but I have to first acknowledge that we have all experienced trials and losses this year. We've experienced darkness.

But we have also experienced many bright stars, particularly at UUCR—Rev. Rebekah's inspirational messages; music that brings us to tears, to laughter,

and to joy; the beauty of our campus in spring; children learning, growing, and playing; and the phone call from a friend. We've learned to be together and to support each other throughout it all—even when we are physically apart. That has been possible thanks to the bright stars of the volunteers and staff who helped us communicate and share via the web.

It has taken all of us acting in our distinctive ways together as one, wherever we are – geographically, emotionally, and spiritually. And that brings me to the Canvass.

One form of darkness is that UUCR has lost some funding streams, particularly rental income, due largely to the pandemic. We need to confront that head on as we secure the future of our community.

The stars that will overcome the darkness are all of us! In the financial realm, UUCR's condition is good, even with the challenges we have faced. Income from pledges has enabled UUCR to continue its good work, reaching out with messages and works inspiring hope, love, generosity, and justice. Your generous support helped us to offer excellent web and hybrid services, to make needed repairs to our facilities, to support our terrific staff, and to do much more that is meaningful to you!

And now, *Together as One, Wherever We Are*, we aspire to continue this excellent work, while thoughtfully preparing for the future. And we can do this—with less than a 1% increase in this year's annual budget! Because rental Income has gone down during the pandemic, and other costs are up, to balance the next budget requires both a 9% increase in pledges, and more rentals. We all must do our part, as best we are able.

If you have never participated in the UUCR canvass—or not in recent years—and are wondering what it's all about, please read on.

(continued on page 11)

### ANNUAL CANVASS

(Together As One...continued from page 10)

#### **Questions and Answers**

#### What is the Canvass?

The canvass is our annual pledge drive, when we renew our commitments to support UUCR financially. It's the formal call to keep UUCR running!

#### How does it work?

We ask everyone in the congregation—both members and friends—to make a written pledge, which is a promise to contribute a specific amount of money to UUCR during the next fiscal year, July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023. This year's Canvass Sunday takes place on March 13.

#### What is UUCR's financial condition?

Our financial condition is both good and somewhat worrisome. We have continued to be able to fully pay our amazing staff, meet the rest of our financial obligations, and maintain our beautiful campus. UUCR has thus far met all the financial challenges we have faced during the pandemic. Members and friends remained generous during last year's canvass; a one-time SBA Payroll Protection Program grant helped offset a drop in rental income (a source of funds that we are working to rebuild); and our investments have grown in value. However, the number of people making financial pledges has declined, creating more uncertainty for UUCR's leadership during the budgeting process.

The Board intends to keep UUCR's financial position strong—while providing for all that makes UUCR what it is—with a responsible, no-deficit budget. To do so, we need a 9% increase in contributions from members and friends in the coming fiscal year.

#### What will we be spending our money on?

Most of our budget (> 70%) pays for our terrific staff, who are essential to providing our outstanding services and programs. This coming year, with the additional support we are seeking, we hope to increase UUCR's outreach to the congregation, our community, and the world by improving web services and programs.

#### How much should I pledge?

If you have never pledged, consider these broad ranges:

- Between 2% and 10% of your pre-tax income
- Between 20% and 90% of the amount of federal income tax that you pay
- Between 20% and 90% of the purchase price of your newest motor vehicle

If you have made a pledge to UUCR in the past, please consider raising your pledge by 9%.

#### Can't I just write a check, without a pledge?

The benefit of making an annual pledge is that our leaders will have a good idea of what they will have to work with as they make their plans. We do realize that family finances can change unexpectedly, and we plan accordingly. So, as we embark on this challenging year, UUCR is here for you as it has been for the past 65 years.

#### How do I pledge?

You can pledge through the UUCR web page at <u>uucr.org/canvass</u> or by completing a pledge card on Canvass Sunday.

We'll be updating Canvass information on the UUCR website as well as *E-News* bulletins. In the meantime, we all look forward to inspirational storytelling from friends and congregants about why they cherish UUCR. "Canvass Moments" will be included in Sunday services until Canvass Sunday on March 13.

#### Where can I learn more?

Much more information about the canvass, pledging, and the UUCR budget is on the UUCR website <u>uucr.org/canvass</u>. And the canvass team welcomes your questions and comments! You can contact us at <u>canvass@uucr.org</u>.

Finally, thank you for reading this. And please remember that we welcome all pledges, large and small. Please give as you are able. UUCR thanks you for your generosity.

# Quest

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rockville 100 Welsh Park Drive Rockville, MD 20850

### RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

February 16, 2022

DATED MATERIAL

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### Unitarian Universalist Principles

As a member congregation of the Unitarian Universalist Association, we covenant to affirm and promote:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

In addition to these Seven Principles, the members of UUCR voted to support the UUA in moving toward incorporating a proposed Eighth Principle that may be as stated below:

• Journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.

### **Our Mission and Vision**

The mission and vision of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rockville is to *Practice Courageous Love.* 

### **Our Values**

Lifelong Spiritual Discovery ~ Beloved Community ~ A Just World