

CONNECTIONS

A COASTAL VIRGINIA UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS QUARTERLY

IN THIS ISSUE

MEET THE MUSIC—GET TO
KNOW CVUU TALENT

TOP TEN THINGS TO KNOW
BY REV. VIOLA ABBITT

BEVY OF BOOK REVIEWS &
POETRY BY OUR UUs



Rev. Justine's parting epistle

*Here is a mystery:
If sweeping
through the door
of my heart there
moves continually
a genuine love
for you, it bypasses
all your hate
and all your indifference
and gets through
to you at your center.
You are powerless
to do anything about it.
You may keep alive
in devious ways
the fires of your bitter
heart, but they cannot
get through to me.
Underneath the surface
of all the tension,
something else is at work.
It is utterly impossible
for you to keep another
from loving you.*



(Howard Thurman, 1899 – 1981)

Dear Ones,

The desk calendar in the minister's office at CVUU is still on March, like an ancient city frozen in time. I have been to the office many times since March, but I have been reluctant to turn that page, one tiny last stand of protest of all that has transpired since we last gathered in each other's physical presence (which was on

Cont. page 2

Environmentalism in the time of COVID-19

By Valerie Rottink

There are clear skies over Los Angeles, dolphins have returned to Venice, and carbon emissions have dropped during lockdowns. We are seeing how major changes can vastly help the planet, but what happens once we leave the current normal and enter a new normal? The positive effects we are seeing will not remain without everyone doing their part, and the damage to our planet is more than just what we see on the surface. People ask when we can go back to how things were previously, but for the sake of our planet and future generations, we cannot return to what was. We must continue to improve our habits to be more sustainable from home, and the main problem seems to be consumption. So how can we continue to do better for the planet?

Keep Bea Johnson's (author, Zero Waste Home) 5 R's in mind: refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle, rot. Refuse what we don't need. Reduce what we consume. Reuse what we can. Recycle when it can be. And let the rest rot (compost). All this before simply throwing things in the trash to be sent to the landfill. Keep asking yourself, "Do I really need this?". Could the packaging be reused? Do you have something at home that you could reuse instead of buying new?

It can be difficult to make switches in our daily lives. Pet food usually comes in giant plastic bags, much of our fruits and vegetables get wrapped in plastic before arriving at the store, and many paper goods like paper towels and toilet paper get wrapped in several layers of plastic. Check out these various switches you can try, but also get creative with it. If you do make any switches make sure to use everything to its fullest before switching. And let me know if you try anything! I'm all for talking about sustainability.

- **Paper towels/Disinfectant Wipes** - reusable bamboo paper towels, Swedish towels, microfiber cloths, cut up t-shirts
- **Toilet Paper** - 100% recycled paper TP, Bamboo TP
- **Plastic Wrap** - beeswax wrap, reusable containers, a plate over a bowl, silicon wraps, shower caps
- **Grocery Bags** - reusable mesh market bags, all those free tote bags from those events
- **Cutlery** - reusable cutlery in a travel pouch, edible cutlery
- **Sandwich Bag** - silicone bags, reusable container, wax paper
- **Face wipes** (to clean your face/remove makeup) - bamboo pads, microfiber cloths
- **Tea Bags** - loose leaf tea steeped

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Cont. from page 1

March 8th). But now it is June and turn the page we must, for our time together is coming to a close.

It hurts my heart to leave you, and hard as it is, I am grateful for the pain, for the sadness that lets me know that I have truly loved you, all of you and each of you.

It is utterly impossible for you to keep another from loving you.

In worship on May 17, I named some of your many successes. I could not possibly name them all, and I probably don't even know them all. There are in this congregation so many sources of competence and strength, each of you with individual passions and expertise that you bring to this community of faith. CVUU is made stronger by not only your unity but also by your diversity, by your different backgrounds, your differences of opinion, and yes, even by your conflict. I hope it feels to you, as it does to me, that you have begun to feel more comfortable in engaging conflict directly - not in the parking lot after a meeting, but in the meeting, in the moment, or soon after with the people involved. The goal is not to achieve unanimity of thought, quite the opposite. The goal is to make space for all the voices, especially those that have not always been heard, have not always been listened to.

This making space for listening to previously unheard or unrecognized voices is precisely what is missing from our public discourse. Oh, how I wish the media (social media and news media) would stop amplifying the ugliness coming out of many of our holders of high office and would instead really work to make space for those who have been crying out for so long. *How long, how long, oh, Lord, how long?*

What can we do, as one congregation in a tiny faith community in the vastness of what passes for public discourse?

1. Demand better.

Write letters to the editor calling out racist or inflammatory or misleading coverage of events involving people of color. If you are white, use your voice to amplify the unheard cries of people of color, and to do



Image credit/Steve Daniel 2018

Justine speaks with the kids of CVUU during the Time For All Ages. Working with the children was among her greatest joys!

“Even in the time of COVID. The world needs our UU faith more than ever, and the people of Hampton Roads need you.”

that, my white friends, we need to 2. Listen.

Not challenge, not defend, not explain, listen. There is perhaps a time and a place for “debate.” This is not it. Our black siblings are crying out in pain. Listen.

3. Model a different type of discourse. Practice “compassionate communication.” Plans for practice groups, following our compassionate communication class in February got put on hold by Covid-19. I urge you to take this up again early in the new church year, and keep working toward deepening the skills needed to engage hard topics in love. That doesn't mean being “nice.” It means being willing to be vulnerable and being both trusting and trustworthy. Show the world that it doesn't have to be this way.

If you do these things: demand better from both our public officials and the media, listen to one another, and model something different by learning to engage hard conversations in love, you will make a difference. As you already are. Look how many people have been drawn to you just in the past couple of years! They come to check you out, and they feel welcomed and return. Even in the time of COVID. The world needs our UU faith more than ever, and the people of Hampton Roads (and now that you're online, even beyond Hampton Roads) need you. *[They] need you to survive* to quote that beautiful song by Hezekiah Walker that a special choir sang at CVUU in, was it only in February? *You are important to me; I need you to survive....*

Beloveds, you have everything you need to flourish and grow. I know that your new minister Rev. Viola Abbitt will serve you and our Unitarian Universalist faith well. It is been a great honor and a source of deep joy to serve as your minister in this interim time. Thank you.

With Love and Gratitude,

Justine

Rev. Justine Sullivan
Interim Minister, CVUU
C 508-662-0279
Minister@c-vuu.org

Cont. from page 1

in a reusable strainer

- **Public Restroom Paper Towels** - Carry a handkerchief (or take a smaller amount of paper and fold it in half. The dual-layer absorbs better)
- **Liquid Laundry Detergent** (in a plastic container) - Powder Laundry Detergent (in a mostly Cardboard Box), detergent pods,
- **Floss** (string or individual picks) - Water Flosser, natural floss
- **Pads / Tampons** - DivaCup, period panties, cotton tampons / pads
- **Kitchen Trash Bags** - Compostable trash bags, no bag & wash the bin regularly
- **Gift Wrap/Bags** - reuse the Sunday Funnies or purchase products that don't have that shiny plastic lining. Stamp your own patterns onto it. If you buy Who Give A Crap TP, their paper works great for shipping stuffing, gift bag stuffing, and gift wrap!
- **Plastic Razors** - stainless steel razor with replaceable blades
- **Shampoo/Conditioner** - shampoo/conditioner bars
- **Containers** (take out, medica-

tion, etc.) - Reuse those containers for various household items, or even take them back to hold your next order of takeout!

Recently, I've reused packaging for craft projects Glass is not longer recycled by TFC, the major recycling company for our area, so I've been trying to find ways to reuse it. My cute little Oui yogurt cups get reused for cosmetics, wine stoppers, and plant starter pots. I was using a bamboo toothbrush for a while, but my teeth didn't feel clean after, so I've switched to an electric toothbrush. Which is still less plastic than a normal plastic toothbrush.

So, let's start a conversation. I'd love to know what you've tried to in the effort to implement the 5 Rs and exchange tips; things that worked, and those that didn't. Come find me during coffee hour or on Facebook!

Valerie Rottink is a life-long UU, raised in our congregation. She leads the Young Adult Group & is a member of the Stitcher's Circle, Communications Team & Environmental Initiative Committee.

Interested in social justice?

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 Social Justice Committee's role is to increase the congregation's knowledge of these topics and to encourage participation in appropriate local organizations and activities.

Contact: Lynn Waltz:
lynn@lynnwaltz.com

ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVE PRESENTS

CLIMATE CHANGE PREVENTION

SIMPLE STEPS WITH HUGE IMPACT

CONSERVE WATER.

NOT USING IT? TURN IT OFF!



Turn off the faucet when brushing your teeth (and washing the dishes). Check your home for leaks. Reduce your time in the shower if you can. Plant hardier, native plants that require less water. .
Source: <https://tinyurl.com/y7uyac6l>

REDUCE YOUR WASTE.

& MAKE IT A HABIT TO RECYCLE

Only use what you need, and consider ways to replace disposables with reusable options! Carry your own washable utensils, or handkerchiefs in place of paper towels! Take bags and containers to the store to replace plastic bags and plastic/styrofoam containers.

Source: *Zero Waste Home* by Bea Johnson



SAVE AND MAXIMIZE ENERGY

USE ENERGY-SAVING APPLIANCES



Open your curtains and blinds during the day and close them at night to conserve heat. When boiling water on the stove, keep a lid on the pot to speed the heating process. Properly set your thermostat according to the season.

Source: <https://tinyurl.com/y3fnk7ra>

WALK AND TRAVEL GREEN.

LESS POLLUTION, MORE BENEFITS

Ride a bicycle. Opt for taking walks close to home. Take public transportation. Carpool. Avoid travelling during rush hour. Plan your route ahead of time.

Source: <https://tinyurl.com/rull4rs>



STAND UP AND GET INVOLVED

VOICE YOUR CONCERNS



Keep track of local initiatives to advocate a more environmentally friendly society!

Resource: <https://tinyurl.com/yx633q3k>

Make sure the whole family knows these tips so they can be on board too!

[HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/CVUUENVIRONMENTAL](https://tinyurl.com/cvuuenvironmental)



Understanding the Effects of Injustice

By Steve Hansen

The opposite of poverty is **injustice**. (Bryan Stevenson, Founder/Executive Director of the Equal Justice Initiative)



The outcome of injustice always is poverty in one or more forms. The root cause of all injustice is a distorted moral narrative driven by fear and greed.

All injustice manifests itself in one or more forms of poverty:

- Poverty of living standards,
- Poverty of stable climate, abundant natural resources, clean air, clean water, healthy food, forests,
- Poverty of opportunity, and/or
- Poverty of peace

Economic Injustice leads to labor exploitation in the form of depressed wages, poor working conditions, lack of healthcare, etc.

Environmental Injustice leads to environmental exploitation and devastation.

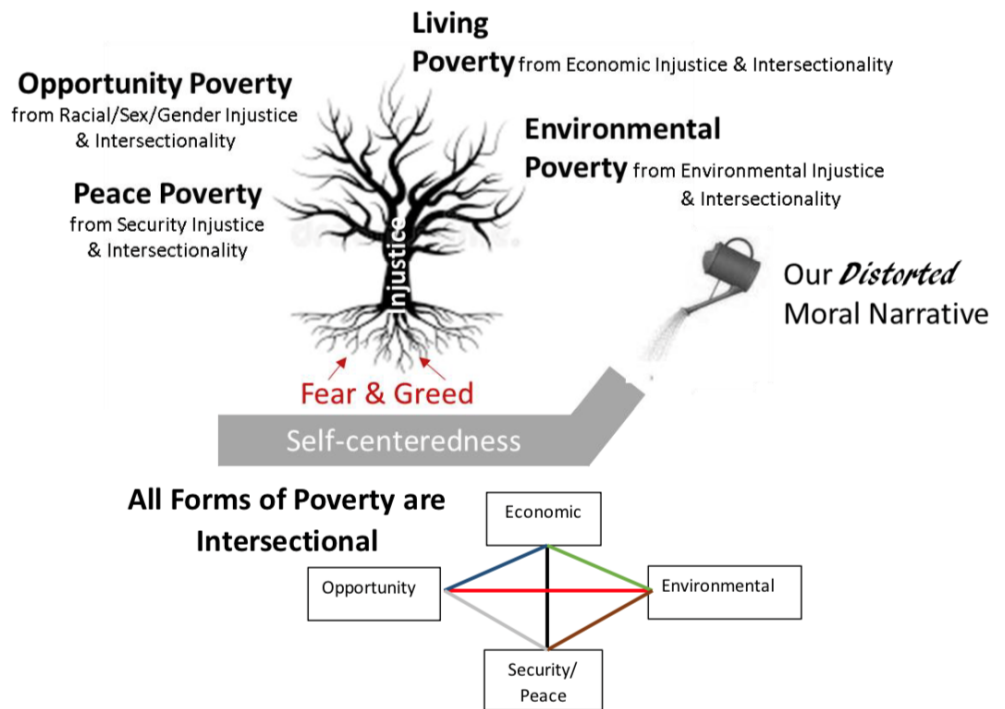
Racial/Sex/Gender Injustice leads to discrimination, inequality, mass incarceration, and lack of opportunity.

Security Injustice leads to paranoia, national bullying, unbalanced funding away from social programs, the myth of redemptive violence, civil militarism.

Why we all need to stand up against injustice everywhere:

First they came for exploited workers, and I did not speak out— Because I was not a laborer.
Then they came for the environmentalists, and I did not speak out— Because I was not an environmentalist.
Then they came for LGBTs, and I did not speak out— Because I was not LGBT.
Then they came for the Blacks and immigrants, and I did not speak out— Because I was not a Black or immigrant.

When Injustice is Unchecked, the Whole Tree Dies



Intersectionality	Example of Effect
Living on Environmental Poverty	Cost of many good environmental practices unreachable by poor
Environmental on Living Poverty	Industrial pollution centered near low-income communities
Environmental on Security Poverty	Climate refugees create border tension; sea rise threaten Naval bases
Security on Environmental Poverty	Large Defense Department is major polluter
Living on Opportunity Poverty	Opportunities like quality education come at a cost unaffordable by the poor
Opportunity on Living Poverty	Biased restrictions/limitations negatively influence income mobility
Living on Security Poverty	Wealth gap affects social class tensions
Security on Living Poverty	War economy diverts resources from social programs
Environmental on Opportunity Poverty	Restricting Green Economy limits job opportunities
Opportunity on Environmental Poverty	Big, non-green industry financially supports college degree programs favoring science and engineering biased towards their purpose
Security on Opportunity Poverty	Biased incarceration is the New Jim Crow
Opportunity on Security Poverty	Gender and sexual orientation bias sub-optimizes security structure

Then they came for peacemakers, and I did not speak out— Because I was not a peacemaker.
Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.
In this article I hope I've demonstrated to you that no matter what your social justice focus is:

the environment, economic poverty, racism, sexism, gender bias, immigration, and/or peace, they all are a form of poverty—a poverty caused by injustice that is promoted by our distorted national narrative driven by fear and greed. These forms of pov-

erty are all inter-relational, interdependent, and intersectional. An advancement in one area produces collateral benefits in others. If we all work together to change our national narrative based on greed and fear to a national narrative of compassion and generosity, we all will benefit. Forward Together!

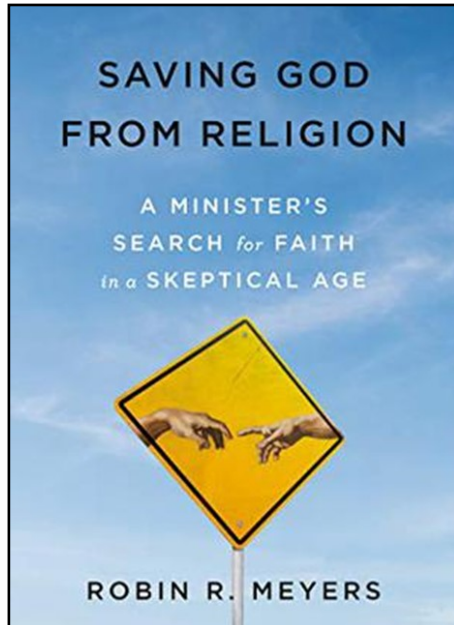
Steve Hansen is the Virginia Poor People's Campaign Environmental Committee Co-chair and a Tri-chair of Virginia Poor People's Campaign in Hampton Roads. Steve is a member of CVUU and he lives in Chesapeake, VA. He can be reached at shansen@lumos.net.

'Saving God from Religion' recommended reading for UUs

By Steve Hansen

On the current UUA website there is a section called [UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST VIEWS OF GOD](#) which is really quite good at pointing out many UUs don't consider the concept of God meaningful in today's modern, scientific world, while many others take comfort in relating to something transcendent and immanent that is greater than us. What almost all UUs can agree upon is that the God sitting in heaven and judging us (like the God depicted by Michelangelo on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel) does not exist. "Saving God from Religion: A Minister's Search for Faith in a Skeptical Age," by Robin R. Meyers, is in perfect agreement with that.

In the aforementioned UUA web section several UU pastors provide short essays on their concept of God. The essays entitled Life Force, Mystery, The Web of Existence, Community, Love, and Relationship resonate with me. This book fits so well within those areas of thought and expands upon them so well that this book



should be included at the top of the "Recommended Reading" list that follows the UU essays. This is no surprise since the book's author, United Church of Christ pastor Robin Meyers brings Buddhist, poetic, scientific, Unitarian, and social justice sensibilities to his writing. Plus, this book is very readable. If you sense modern science can inform your concept of God but you

lack a scientific background, the chapter "Quantum Physics and the Common Good" will be immensely helpful. (For those steeped in science this section may seem trivial.) In the chapter "Every Move We Make: A Theology of Consequence" Meyers gives center stage to social justice, moving the reader from a theology of obedience to one of consequence. He argues that we need to stop seeing our actions as a means for pleasing a distant God and rediscover how God has empowered us to care for ourselves and the world. If you consider traditional prayer irrelevant but feel a void giving up prayer entirely, the chapter "Prayer as Access, Not Petition" is spiritual food for thought. In summary, if you are a UU coming from a religious tradition that caused you to seriously question your concept of God and you are looking for an alternative, this book is highly recommended.

Steve Hansen is the Virginia Poor People's Campaign Environmental Committee Co-chair and a Tri-chair of Virginia Poor People's Campaign in Hampton Roads. Steve is a member of CVUU and he lives in Chesapeake, VA. He can be reached at shansen@lumos.net.

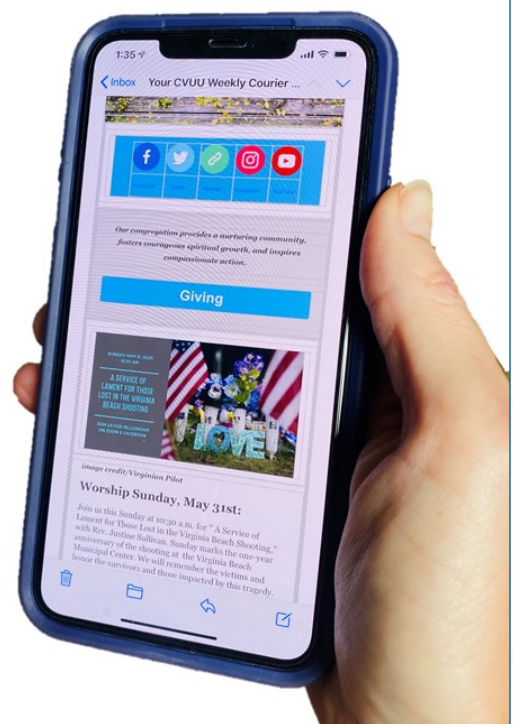


Coastal Virginia
Unitarian Universalists

Weekly Courier

Staying connected with our CVUU members is important to us, now more than ever! If you would like up-to-date weekly news from this congregation, easily accessible from a desktop, phone or tablet, subscribe to our weekly newsletter, which publishes every Wednesday!

To subscribe, contact comm-coordinator@c-vuu.org or go to: <http://eepurl.com/dLqnOw>



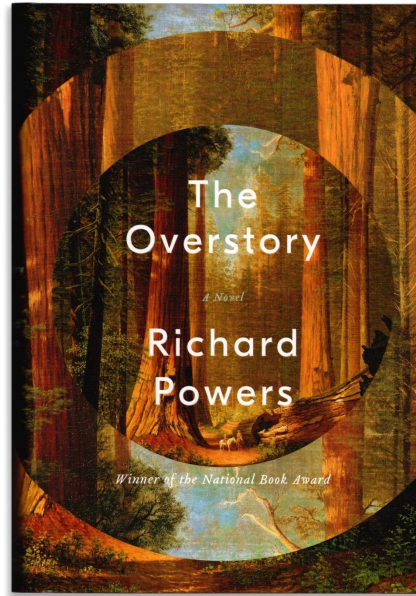
'Overstory' is an eco-epic & love story all in one

By Tracy Brune

"The Overstory," by National-Book-Award-winning writer Richard Powers is so unlike any novel I've ever read before. It's more like a dozen novellas wrapped up in a love story to trees and the mystical, sustaining grandeur of nature.

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize in 2018, the 500-page novel has been hailed as an eco-epic, an ode to activism, a story whose context is wider than human life and a book that will forever change the way you look at trees. It is all these things and more. From a UU perspective, it struck me that "The Overstory" is our 7th Principle writ large. You couldn't come away from this novel without a renewed and heartbreaking respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

The book is organized from the bottom up, just as a tree matures - roots, trunk, crown and seeds. Powers takes us through the lives of nine individuals with a keen connection to the natural world around them and how that connection propels them to try and save what humankind has



destroyed, what humankind cannot, will not see. This book will break your heart even while mending it. It will also be one of those books that makes you savor the elegance and art that great writing can be. You will want to dogear nearly every page and you will find yourself returning to your favorite passages just to enjoy rereading them; sentences like this one - "The particle of her private self rejoins everything it has been split off from - the plan of runaway green."

Or this passage: "But people have no idea what time is. They think it's a line, spinning out from three seconds behind them, then vanishing just as fast into the three seconds of fog just ahead. They can't see that time is one spreading ring wrapped around another, outward and outward until the thinnest skin of Now depends for its being on the enormous mass of everything that has already died."

While this is not a light read, its depth and heft will still hold your imagination and have you reading long into the night. And despite the dark truths it lays bare - that we humans are just bit players in a much larger and continuous sequence of birth and death, it will also comfort you with the mysteries of the infinite.

"This is how it must go. There will be catastrophes. Disastrous setbacks and slaughters. But life is going someplace. It wants to know itself; it wants the power of choice. It wants solutions to problems that nothing alive yet knows how to solve, and it's willing to use even death to find them."

Tracy Brune is CVUU's Communications Coordinator, an avid reader and member of CVUU's Novel Ideas Book Club.

There is a line between our habits and our dying planet

By Karen Forget

Climate change is clearly humanity's greatest challenge, but how did we get to this precipice. Hope Jahren, an award winning scientist, brilliant writer, and inspired teacher, shows us what happened to our world, how it changed, how we changed in "The Story of More, How we Got to Climate Change and Where to Go from Here."

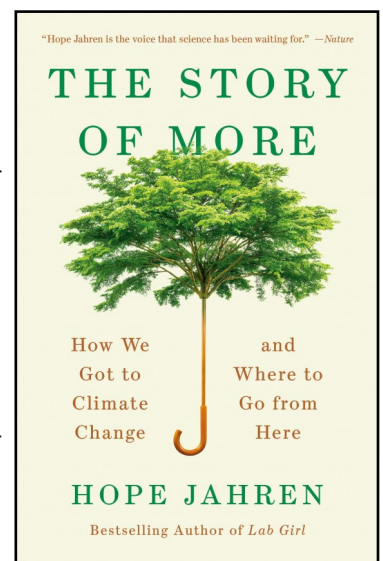
She presents the science and the history with clarity and perspective. She draws the line between our habits and our damaged planet. How are our food systems and power generation connected to superstorms, sea level rise, even a global pan-

demic? Knowing how we got here is the first step to understanding what we need to do now.

There are many good books about climate change, but none that tells the story more clearly and helps chart a path forward.

E.O. Wilson calls Jahren's book "A superb account of the deadly struggle between humanity and what may prove to be the only life-bearing planet within ten light-years, written in a brilliantly sardonic and conversational style."

Karen Forget is a CVUU member and the Executive Director of Lynnhaven Now.



'Welcome' sometimes means welcome back

I just want to say what a welcoming, ministering, and beautiful community we have here at CVUU. I've known this for years, but was reminded of it recently.

Part of being a welcoming community is not only welcoming folks new to CVUU, but welcoming *back* folks *not* new to CVUU. Folks who, for varying reasons, haven't attended church service in some time.

I am one of those folks. While I have been a member for about 15 years, serving on various committees and teaching RE for 10+ years in the past, and currently co-leading a covenant circle for

8 +years, I have not physically attended church service in over 3.

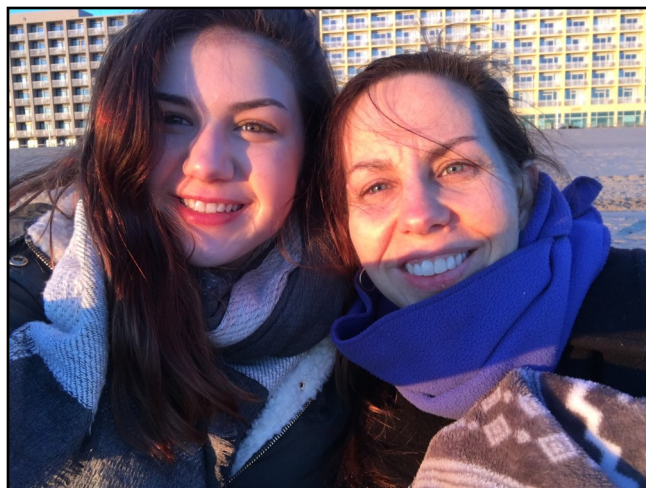
The Coronavirus and it's ensuing stay-at-home order have given me multiple silver linings. The opportunity and ease of attending service virtually and reconnecting with this loving community has been one of them. My feeling welcome is due in part to good old fashioned, friendly faces and kind words at coffee hour, but also it is due in large part to some very loving ministry by a few deeply kind CVUU members.

Back in March, my daughter, Lauren, was in the hospital and I was too sick to visit her and too sick to go grocery shopping or to cook. I had symptoms of COVID-19, but couldn't get tested due to the shortage and restrictions in place at the time. I posted something to this effect on Facebook and Paula Echols immediately offered to

bring me and my family soup. (And Barbara Zimmer offered to make me my own soup because I have a weird list of food sensitivities). My first instinct was to say, "No thanks," as I am not used to being the help-ee. I am used to being the help-er. Plus. I thought, "I haven't been to church in years, I don't deserve this." But, I was kind of desperate, so I decided to accept their offer.

Paula brought me a stack of delicious soup the next day to feed me and my family for several days. Yay! Between Paula & Barbara, I felt so taken care of; so ministered to. And not necessarily super worthy of it, but I felt loved by this community and was very moved by their ministry to me. Then. A few weeks later, Elisa Dickson called to just check in on me and my family. And she did so again the next week! Again, I was moved by this show of caring and love.

I stayed for my first coffee hour after attending my second or third virtual service (it took me a few weeks to work up the courage to stay and chat -not only am I a recovering shy person, but I also felt a bit self conscious). After not attending church for so long, I was mildly dreading potentially awkward conversation questions such as, "Wow. It's been a



Rosemary Ayres and her daughter, Lauren.

long time since you've come to church. Where have you been?" But no one asked me anything like that. Everyone just treated me like any other member and phew, that was a relief! So. I went back for coffee hour the next week, too. After one of those coffee hours, it came up that my daughter had been sick and hospitalized-again. We'd had a COVID scare, but she tested negative and was OK. A few days later, there was a card in the mail for her. Hand written, with love. From Susan Berger and The Caring Team. Again, I felt ministered to and moved by the love from this community.

All that to say, "Thank you, CVUU!" You all rock, especially The Caring Team!

With love and gratitude, I am proud and happy to be a part of this welcoming and loving community.

~Rosemary Reilly Ayres

CVUU HAS TWO BOOK CLUBS!

Novel Ideas Book Club (NIBC) meets the 3rd Wednesday of the month from 6 - 8 p.m. To join, contact Suzanne Ludwick at LudwickFamily@gmail.com.

Book Lovers Group meets the last Saturday of the month from 12:30 - 2:30 p.m. To join, contact Vicki Caminer at Vicki0737@hotmail.com.



**Building Beloved
Community
#VoteLove in 2020**

Text VoteLove to 51555 to
subscribe to UU the Vote – get
campaign updates, resources
and more!



CVUU'S POETRY CORNER

By Jannie Marvel
(Reprinted from June 2019)

A writing desk is a writing desk. But not for poet Sheila Dinwiddie.

"I am a Kitchen Table Poet. I began in the 1950's and always wrote there while the kids were napping. It was the time of quiet for me" she said. "I had to sneak a moment when I could write, so my poetry is "short and sweet," she said.

Dinwiddie is the inaugural CVUU poet at the new Poet's Post located on the right wall in the Social Hall just past the stairs and coffee serving area. The poet has two framed poems displayed.

First is "My Religion Is Yellow," a poem she wrote about 50 years ago. "It was my spiritual manifesto. I was so grateful to have found the Unitarian religion that celebrated all of life. I wrote Jesus Said sticking up for the loving kindness that Jesus preached.

Second is "Jesus Said," is a poem that reminds readers of Jesus' teachings. He

Haikus by Sheila Dinwiddie

Flowers here and gone
Speak to us in bright
colors
Saying seize the day

The stars gave us Earth
Earth gave us
Everything.
We are killing it

said, "Love Your Neighbor As Yourself." In the poem are many examples of Jesus' teachings such as "Give It To The Poor" and "The Greatest Thing is Love."

She has stayed with different mediums of poetry to this day. Recently she has been writing haiku, some of which are funny, some deeply serious. She began writing haiku in 2016 when her partner passed away.



Dinwiddie says her focus is to write poetry for the people who don't like poetry. They read mine because it contains discussions about a variety of injustices. "Writing is a form of meditation for me," she added.

She has read at several UCN Coffee Houses, on WHRO- Radio and in other venues.

Dinwiddie has hosted a Writer's Group at her home for more than five years. The groups works from the book, "Writing Down The Bones," by Natalie Goldberg.

My Religion Is Yellow - by Sheila Dinwiddie

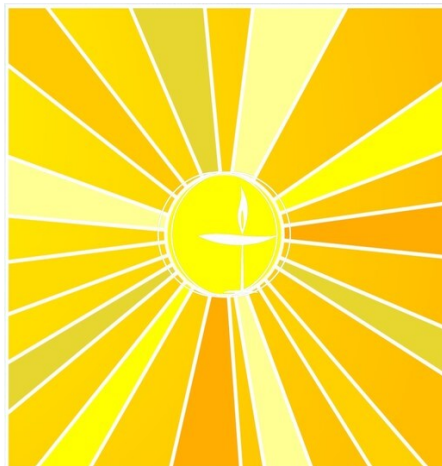
My religion is yellow, hot generous daffodils after a miserable winter. My religion is photosynthesis.

My religion is children with their soft shelled freedom and sex with its giddy and welcome interruption to my religion which sits alone watching the ecology crumble.

My religion is memories, mine and everyone else's; has not always been but is now order, as onto canvass from within the artist. My religion is immediate.

My religion watches the color retreat from my hair and shudders; or something on top of my religion shudders.

My religion smiles at strangers, speaks too frankly for anyone's comfort, even my religion's.



My religion bows to little braveries: spit wads, recycling, pink hats, voting third party, jogging.

Cigarettes are not my religion alcohol, grease, sugar, red meat are not my religion – they are my habits.

My habits are stronger than my religion. My religion is remorse. Envy, jealousy, loneliness, are not my religion: they are my fears

Therapy is my religion: family systems, gestalt, Rogerian. My fears are holes in my religion.

Roofs are my religion – pointed ones – and restaurants.

Food is my religion: fixing it, growing it, eating it, offering it, accepting it.

My religion is mending and the mender.

My religion is women – and men – full of tenderness, spunk, forgiveness.

Poetry is my religion which is everything.



Rev. Viola coming up on the finish line after finishing a marathon in 2018.

Top 10 Things to Know About Rev. Viola!

While she may have spent her May candidating week in a multitude of Zoom meetings, we bet there were still many things you didn't learn about our new minister, Rev. Viola Abbitt. And being a good sport, she submitted these gems:

- Knows how to play the nose flute
- Walked a marathon, and finished it
- Has a red belt in tae kwon do
- Learned how to spin wool and linen thread
- Never met a roller coaster she didn't like
- Favorite vacation spot: the hammock in her back yard (she is bringing the hammock with her)
- Went to high school in a town called Sleepy Hollow and the school mascot was the Headless Horseman
- Bakes a wicked cheesecake
- Loves to take road trips
- Keeps dancing shoes in the trunk of her car, just in case.

To learn more about Rev. Viola Abbitt go to: <https://www.c-vuu.org/biography-of-rev-viola-abbitt/>

CVUU Children's program stays busy

CVUU's Religious Education has been busy since the Covid-19 pandemic started. I don't think we have missed a beat. Children's Chalice Chapel meets every Sunday before the CVUU virtual church service at 9:45 a.m. Our summer program will be based on the Eight Principles, studied in order, 1-8.

CVUU Pen Pals

We would like to invite adults and children to participate in our CVUU Pen Pal Project. We are starting the pen pal project to get CVUU adults connected with CVUU children. Each interested adult and child's parent can register at the link below or contact Paul Greggs, DRE at 757-617-1106 or at dre@c-vuu.org and if you are interested. Once we get a good size list of names we will pair an adult up with a child. We have not figured out if we want to go completely electronic or use the postal service. It will depend on the parent's preference most likely. First step is to show interest. So send me your name and/or child's name so we can match a CVUU child with a CVUU Adult. The list is beginning to grow. We would like more children and adults to sign up.



Pen Pal Registration: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1PWUQ2DC-ryXoH7vUByDqnB2gLB-PRDobWYT5A_RlwTFg/edit?ts=5eced36e

Chalice Camp

The Racial Justice Committee is partnering with CVUU's Religious Education to offer a virtual Chalice Camp this year. The theme of camp is "Identity and Justice" with an emphasis on anti-racism and resistance as Unitarian Universalists. It will be from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM July 6-10, 2020. There will be no fee unless your child wants a t-shirt.

Paul R. Greggs

Director of Religious Education

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Avoid stereotypes when talking about addiction

By Rick Docksai

We UUs generally agree that we should choose our words wisely when talking about sensitive social issues such as gender, racism, or immigration. We know that even a well-meaning person can cause hurt feelings—or in some cases, perpetuate harmful stereotypes—by saying incorrect or ignorance-based things in a conversation about one of these topics. The same is true for conversations about addiction. The medical community's understanding is constantly evolving, and it's finding that many of the ways we commonly talk about addiction and those who have addictions are not accurate and may even be harmful. We need to change them if we really want to help. I'll go over some examples in this article.

Problematic: “He/she/they is an alcoholic.”

Instead, say this: “He/she/they has alcohol use disorder.”

Why: “Alcoholic” was never a medical term. And medical professionals have in recent years shifted toward a new term, “[alcohol use disorder](#)” (AUD). And someone who is fully addicted to alcohol isn't an “alcoholic”; they're a person with “severe AUD.” The DSM-V, published 2013, states that AUD covers the full spectrum of problem drinking, from “alcohol abuse” on one end to full-blown “alcohol dependence” on the other. This trend toward using AUD is partly because problematic drinking is indeed a spectrum. The line between drinking too much and being dependent on alcohol is blurry, and people can move from the low end to the severe end over time. Likewise, some do the opposite: They engage in problem drinking for a short time but return to safe moderate drinking, without ever needing to quit drinking forever.

But that's not the only reason that health professionals don't like the word “alcoholic.” It's also because the word that still carries stigma and shame. No one wants to be called an alcoholic. And telling someone that they are one may only make them defensive and even less inclined to seek help.

Problematic: “Addiction is a disease.”

Instead, say this: “Addiction is a prob-



lem. Let's help you solve it.”

Why: The “disease” theory of addiction became popular in the mid-twentieth century, [driven partly by Alcoholics Anonymous](#). But ask yourself: If it is a disease, then where does the infection first occur? What “germ” is responsible? Why can't medications cure it? Alcohol isn't a germ. If it was, every drinker would become addicted. And the “infection” doesn't happen at just one drink. It takes time to develop. Addiction—to alcohol or any other substance—isn't comparable to any disease we know.

That's because it isn't a disease. It's a behavior. In the [words of addiction expert Anne Fletcher](#), it's “a habit that grows and perpetuates itself relatively quickly when we repeatedly pursue the same highly attractive goal,” which over time results in “new pathways being built in the brain” that reinforce more and more drinking or using.

What difference does it make what we call it?, you might ask. A profound one. First, if AUD is a disease, then the person suffering from it has no control. The symptoms—uncontrollable drinking—just happen, and the sufferer has no choice in the matter. Only the lifelong intervention of a 12-step program can offer them any relief.

But if it's a habit, then it is not uncontrollable. And it is not forever. Bad habits can be broken.

Any habit starts in the brain. So does AUD. Most—if not all—AUD sufferers

have some underlying psychological or psychiatric issues that drive them to drink or use. Just ask Chris and Pax Prentiss, cofounders of the hugely successful Passages rehab center in Malibu, [who identify four underlying causes of addiction](#):

1. A chemical imbalance in the brain
2. Events of the past that the person has not reconciled
3. Current life conditions that the person cannot cope with
4. Beliefs the person holds that are not true

Any person with an addiction has at least one of the four, according to the Prentisses. They say that sobriety is possible after—and only after—the underlying cause is successfully treated.

Like any habit, the longer and harder the person has been repeating the AUD habit, the harder it will be to break. But it's possible to “unlearn” even a very serious AUD habit with counseling and support groups that teach healthier ways of thinking and better ways of coping with stresses. And after enough counseling, the person can move forward into a healthy, sober life. No longer addicted, and no longer “sick.” The pattern of AUD is broken. The “disease” is no more, as long as they don't pick up another drink. If we're going to confront a problem, let's first be precise about what the problem is.

Problematic: “This person has been in recovery for many years. Good for

them!”

Instead, say this: “This person had a problem with alcohol but got help and solved it. Good for them!”

Why: Don’t be surprised if someone who’s got years or even decades of continued sobriety tells you, “I’m in recovery.” They’re saying this because the disease notion has been so thoroughly ingrained into them. They’ve been taught that they have a lifelong illness and thus are still “diseased” even after all these years of treatment.

To be fair, the first few months of treatment can feel like getting over a terrible illness. But with time, the person’s head clears, the withdrawal symptoms ease, they discover new healthy hobbies and pursuits, and the urge to drink or use fades away. By any measure, that person is now in good health. There is no more “recovering” to do; just the daily effort of living sober.

And yes, living sober is a commitment. But it may be easier if you think of yourself as healthy and able, rather than fixing toxic labels to yourself like “sick” and “needing recovery”. It’s good to feel good about yourself. You have the right to affirm that you are now healthy and that your life is good. You are allowed to get better.

Problematic: “You need AA.”

Instead, say this: “You need help, but let’s figure out what kind of help you need.”

Why: To many Americans, getting help for alcohol addiction means going to AA. But it is absolutely possible to get and stay sober without AA meetings. AA

“... it may be easier if you think of yourself as healthy and able, rather than fixing toxic labels to yourself like “sick” and “needing recovery”. It’s good to feel good about yourself. You have the right to affirm that you are now healthy and that your life is good. You are allowed to get better.”

is not the solution for every AUD sufferer.

A number of alternative programs have sprung up over the years, including SMART Recovery, LifeRing, Secular Organizations for Sobriety (SOS), and Women for Sobriety, among others.

Those who work these other programs with the intention of permanent abstinence have rates of success comparable to AA members, [according to a 2018 study published in the Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment](#).

And some people don’t need meetings at

all. Psychotherapy and taking up healthy pursuits like meditation, yoga, and exercise may be all they need. A sobriety blogger who calls herself Operation Clean Recovery recalls leaving AA after just one meeting. She’s now been sober for six years, all on her own. She realized that moderate drinking was just not possible for her, became absolutely determined to live a sober life, and made it happen. If the will is there, it can be done.

“That said, one of my strongest sobriety mottos is that you have to be willing to throw everything you have at quitting if you really want to quit,” [she wrote](#). There are many paths to recovery. If you or someone you know has a problem with addiction, consider all the issues at hand and decide what course of action will be best. It might involve 12 steps, but it doesn’t have to.

The Bottom Line

Many of us know someone who habitually drinks or uses drugs destructively, or someone who eats, gambles, or engages in some other behavior compulsively. Maybe we ourselves have one of these habits. We want to change the behavior—and that’s a good thing to want. But we need to know how to talk about it. Talk with understanding, caring, and awareness that there is always more to learn, and there’s a better chance you’ll get the right results.

Rick Docksai is a freelance writer, a technical editor for the U.S. Navy, and a member of CVUU’s Communications Committee.

Beloved Pets of CVUU



Above: Mr. Skittles, 12; Button Louise, 4; and Zelda, 18 —Communication Coordinator Tracy Brune’s beloved cats. All rescued from various places in Hampton Roads. Button rules this squad! **Right:** Three years ago, at the age of 8, Sadie made her way from the rescue into the hearts and home of CVUU members, Joe and Carol Pierzynski. It took a bit of work, but she now has them totally trained. Sadie is a Walker Coonhound who loves to walk and walk and walk.



MEET THE MUSIC OF CVUU

Matthew Griset

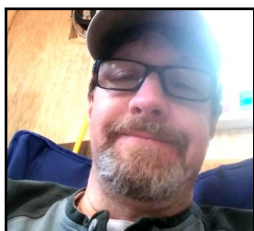
Piano (21 yrs.), Trumpet (6 yrs.), Voice (12 yrs.)

Matt started playing piano when visiting his grandmother one summer in CA. She taught him the typical 'Heart and Soul' as well as 'Chopsticks', and he was hooked. Sometime after his return home, his father put on a CD of Beethoven's 5th. The next day, he heard the tune again, but this time on the piano. He followed the sound until he found its origin, and Matt was playing the melody of the first movement by ear. Matt was placed into piano lessons immediately, and within the same year decided that being a classical musician was the career he wanted to pursue. The next 21 years were spent playing piano in recitals and youth orchestras, writing original compositions, playing trumpet in band and orchestra, attending summer music camps and joining choir. He also pursued district and state level ensembles for trumpet and voice, going on performance tours in America and Europe, becoming section leader, double concentrating in Music Composition and Music Industry in college while pursuing classical voice as an instrument, and coming back to the Tidewater area to become Music Director for CVUU. Matt also sings with the Virginia Symphony Orchestra Chorus and Virginia Chorale, and teaches music lessons. Today, Matt is looking forward to further serving the CVUU community, performing, teaching, and pursuing composition for concert and film.



Elisa Dickon

When Elisa was five her mother decided she should start piano lessons. She took her to the best teacher in town—the meanest woman she ever met. At age nine she saw a concert with 75 harpists playing together and she told her family that was what she wanted to do. It took until she was 11 to convince them she really wanted to do this. They found a teacher, a harp was rented from Lyon & Healy in Chicago and off she went. Time passed and she did pretty well. When she was 15 she was invited to showcase a new harp Lyon & Healy was making on a recital in Carnegie Recital Hall, five floors up from the “real” place. There were several other harpists from NYC on the recital, but she was the only one from Texas. She attended Cleveland Institute of Music for a Bachelors and Masters in harp performance. She taught at Interlochen Center for the Arts in Interlochen, Michigan, Old Dominion University, College of William and Mary, Norfolk Academy and in her private studio. She has played solo and chamber music recitals in many states and performed concertos in Michigan, Canada and Virginia Beach. She has played for touring companies, with the Florida Symphony, VA Symphony, VA Beach Pops Orchestra, VA Opera and also many Unitarian Universalists churches. And she teaches piano to prove you can be nice and do this.



Paul Moss

I have been singing in the church choir for over twenty years. I have a few years singing with the South-eastern Unitarian Universalist Summer Institute (SUUSI) men's choir known as the SUUSI Boyz. I am an occasional piano player and will pluck a few chords on the guitar when the spirit moves me. The intersection of music and worship are an important part of my spirituality and at CVUU I have like minded people who are my musical mentors and friends. To quote Larry Mullen Jr. in U2's movie Rattle and Hum, "It's a musical journey."

Laura Moss

Flute, piccolo, vocal - all 25+ years

Starting with flute lessons at the age of 9, Laura learned quickly and took first chair in all of the student bands of her childhood. In high school, she studied under Dr. Jane Bent, where she added piccolo to her repertoire. This helped her land the principal spot with the high school orchestra. With Dr. Bent's coaching, she performed at the state solo and ensemble competition 8 times, becoming the first person to double-letter in band at her high school. Her senior year she started singing with the school chorus and attended Lawrence University to study music theory in addition to her high school classes. While studying flute under Robert Cole at the University of Wisconsin - Madison as a performance major, she was seduced by the promise of digital technology and switched her major to engineering. She continued to play as first chair in the University Concert Band under the direction of Michael Leckrone. Laura has continued to play, both professionally and for the church, in the time since. She joined the church choir back in 1996, where she currently sings soprano. She also sings alto in the Yarmouth Chamber Singers and sings and plays with the Pagan Music Group. She continues to study voice and piano, and is soon adding hurdy gurdy to her instruments.



MEET THE MUSIC OF CVUU



Robin Chapman

Piano, violin, harmonica, guitar, voice (and just bought a theremin).

When he was 9, Robin saw a Disney TV movie about Beethoven (*The Magnificent Rebel*), fell in love with classical music and began taking piano lessons. To his lasting regret, he only took lessons for about three years, but that laid the groundwork for his lifelong passion for writing and playing music. In high school he took up the guitar, discovered he could sing, joined the chorus, and has since sung in the Virginia Opera (chorus in *A Masked Ball* in 1985), the Virginia Symphony (Beethoven's 9th in 1990), and numerous local musical theater productions. He began violin lessons in 1991 and played electric violin, keyboard and harmonica in a rock group for several years until he was asked to leave because he lacked rhythm.

He joined CVUU (then UCN) in 2016 and the choir later that year and, so far, hasn't been asked to leave. He composes and records music on the computer, which lets him create stuff way beyond his ability to actually perform.

Gerrie Phibbs

I was born late (sixteen years behind my sibs) into a musical family. Everyone sang, most all played the piano. When I was very young, I would sit in the "sitting room" (not to be confused with the "living room") where the baby grand sat, and listen to my brother vocalize before a performance or lesson. He was a very low bass and I would try so hard to match his notes as he went the scale. At age four, I joined my first choir. Didn't matter how off key we were, we always brought the house down! I've been in a choir, chorus, chorale ever since.

In high school I fell in love with musical theatre. I performed with the ODU Opera Workshop for three years. These were lavish productions. We spent months building sets. Backdrops and costumes were sent from NYC. This workshop is considered to be the basis for today's Virginian Opera.

I sang with UCN choir and the Yarmouth Singers for ten or more years. But no matter where I attended church, I joined the choir so I have a wide knowledge of hymns and ritual music. When I retired, I joined the TCC chorale, led by an old teaching friend.

It was while singing with TCC that I was able to go to NYC to sing at Carnegie Hall for a Memorial Day concert.

So, now I have been singing for sixty-six years and I often think it is time to become a listener rather than a performer.



Kate Dowling

Voice (26 years), saxophone (18 years), flute (20 years)

Kate started singing in the Children's Choir at The First Presbyterian Church of Antrim in New Hampshire at age four. Her parents and brother are musical- all playing guitar, both parents playing piano and singing, and mother taking up the Celtic harp when Kate was a child. In fifth grade Kate took up the flute so that she could make music with her mother, but switched to the alto sax in eighth grade. In high school Kate participated in Concert Band, Concert Choir, Jazz Band, and Sax Quartet as well as singing in her church choir.

She decided to pass on her love of music by becoming a teacher and attended in Keene State College where she earned her Bachelor of Music in Music Education. Now Kate teaches Fifth Grade Beginning Orchestra at various elementary schools in Norfolk, but hopes to land a middle school band or orchestra position in the near future. She loves making music with her friends at CVUU under the amazing direction of Matt Griset, and is looking forward to being able to make music for you all again soon.

MEET THE MUSIC OF CVUU

Alicia "Sunny" Phillips

Sunny explains that music has always been a part of the human experience for her. She joined the CVUU choir and band for yet another context in which to ground and exercise her throat chakra, as well as to foster social harmony across barriers. With no formal music education, she just finds enjoyment in experimenting with sound and vibrations. A clairaudient, Sunny receives messages from music, sounds of nature and the inaudible.



Nat Martin

Nat has always loved singing, but suffers from stage fright, so she didn't really sing in front of people until she was 40 years old. She has owned a guitar for four years, and is still no closer to being any good than she was four years ago, but she still enjoys strumming chords and singing in her living room. She can play one song on the recorder, and half a song on the piano. For this reason, she's always looking for musical partners. She was a member of UCN/CVUU's very own The Common Folk, along with frequent collaborator (and friend), Sarah Chappell. Harmonizing with others is one of the great joys of her life, and she loves being a part of CVUU's musical family.

Sarah Chappell

Sarah Chappell has always loved singing. Although she hasn't received much formal training, she has had many years of practice since the days of belting along with Pat Benatar into a hairbrush. As a

kid, Sarah daydreamed of being a rockstar. As she's grown older, her genre preferences have spread out to include almost every kind of music. She still loves to belt out rock, but now she also really loves folk, Americana, and bluegrass. She finds it easy to pick up a harmony with almost any melody, and does so with almost any song she hears.

Sarah has sung with various musicians in various bars and coffee houses over the last two decades, and formed a band called The Common Folk with fellow CVUU member Natalie Martin and their friend Chris Hannah. They are all still friends, though only two of them continue to make music together occasionally. She has recently (like a week ago as of writing this) purchased herself an Appalachian lap dulcimer on a whim, and has fallen in love, taught herself to play a couple of songs, and for the first time ever she has now written both lyrics AND music to a song of her own. With more in the works. She's on YouTube as The Hiking Songstress. Her band, The Common Folk, still has several recordings on SoundCloud.



Wednesday Night Vespers

*Join us at 7 p.m. live on
Facebook @COVAUU*



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