



The CommUUnicator

**Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist
Fellowship of Waynesboro**

Little Celebrations That Save Us

"Nothing is certain except death and taxes," Benjamin Franklin wrote in a letter to French scientist Jean-Baptiste Le Roy on November 13, 1789. There is a strange mixing of those two certainties when you file the final tax return for someone after their death. I e-filed my partner Walter's final returns a little over a week ago, and within three days the small amount he owed the IRS was withdrawn from our bank account. Then seven days after e-filing, a paper check made out to his estate arrived in the mail for the small amount Virginia owed him. It was painless yet poignant.

When we moved to Virginia in 2015, Walter was still doing his own taxes by hand. He was dealing with the effects of dementia, so even though his tax picture was much simpler than it had once been, it took him literally months of frustrating, daily work to get it all squared away before he handed it to me to check his calculations. And then one year he wasn't able to do it at all anymore, so I did the chore for him. After seven years, this task on his behalf is now done.

When Franklin coined his famous dictum, our republic was new. In that context his words suggested that the republic itself, its constitution, and its values were not certainties but accidents of time and place that needed our care. The current political situation in this country highlights the uncertainty of how long the system that we value will last. Federal employees were fired illegally. A billionaire with inexperienced young employees was let loose

without oversight to gut government agencies. Our President abandoned our allies in favor of our enemies. It has been very disruptive. We are in a moment when the future of this country cannot be taken for granted. The volatility of our investments cannot surprise us in the context of these developments.

Before dementia, Walter watched his retirement funds closely for weekly or even daily changes in value. Sometimes he'd say, "I lost \$5,000 this week." Of course, the ups and downs of the market meant that, even with losses in a recession, there would be a time when he'd make back what he lost, and then he'd say, "I earned \$5,000 this week." It was a little game. And when the gains came he'd say, "Let's celebrate!" So we'd go out to eat, go to see a movie, or go into the city for something special like a show at an art museum. Or if it was a really good gain, he'd say, "I earned \$10,000! Let's go to Spain!" Or Turkey, or wherever. We celebrated a lot over the years, without ever touching the account where the gain was earned that justified the celebration. I used to tell him, "You haven't lost or gained anything until you sell." He knew that, of course, and I knew he knew. But our pretending gave us lots of celebrations, large and small.

I imagine that many of you, like me, have been paying close attention to what the current uncertainty means to your future possibilities. Our times produce their unique and common stresses on us all if we are paying attention. I continue to function with the trust that loss in value will be made back if we can but hold on

long enough. In the meantime, let's be on the lookout for the little wins, allowing ourselves to respond with celebrations to see us through to times with greater security.

Peace and Blessings,
Rev. Paul

New Member Spotlight



Annie Garrison comes to UUFW with an impressive array of skills and experience. Over a long and varied career, she has been a consultant helping nonprofits improve their business

practices. She has owned her own business in communications and marketing. And she has taught courses in her areas of interest, including the impact of domestic violence on children, and human trafficking of marginalized and vulnerable women. Her last paid position was in the Clinical Skills Lab at UVA School of Medicine. Throughout her work life, Annie also held volunteer leadership positions for a variety of organizations. Oh, and she also has been a designer of jewelry with semi-precious stones.

In retirement, Annie continues to be involved in volunteer work and activism. She recently stepped down as chair of the Philanthropic Committee of Sin Barreras, a nonprofit that serves the Hispanic community, with offices in Charlottesville and Waynesboro. She has already joined our Social Justice Team. For fun and staying sharp, she is an avid bridge player.

Annie grew up in a Unitarian family in Mercer Island, Washington, near Seattle. Her father was one of the founders of a Unitarian church in Bellevue, Washington. She is a

graduate of UVA and has three sons, six grandchildren and six great grandchildren. After retirement, she moved from Charlottesville, where she had lived for 25 years, to Florida, where two of her sons live. Three years ago, she came back to Waynesboro to be near her third son, who is a senior executive at Augusta Health.

Annie is full of ideas and looks forward to actively participating in the life of our Fellowship.

Meet Our New Director of Religious Education



Shannon Mills became a UUFW member about a year ago, and it soon became obvious that she has much to offer our RE program. So, when Nancy Lay decided it was time to pass the torch, it was just a matter of talking her into the job.

Shannon has extensive experience teaching young children. She has taught lower elementary and preschool in private settings, and she has worked in corporate day care. She has also been a religious educator for an Episcopal church.

At UUFW, Shannon's style is one that promotes creativity through sensory experiences and learning about the natural world through hands-on outside activities. Of course, she will be following the UU curriculum currently being taught in the RE program.

Community News

Beginning April 1, track chair rides through the Blue Ridge Tunnel Trail will be offered by Nelson Co. Parks and Rec. A track chair is an off road capable, electric wheel chair. Click [here](#) for information on dates/times and registration.

