



The CommUUnicator

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

Libraries: Hallmarks of Freedom and Democracy

By Susan Clark

Do you take your kids to the library to get books, find homework information, or go to story time? Have you ever gone to educational programs offered by the library? Do you use the online catalog to find books or other materials you want? Have you done genealogy searching in the library? Most of us have used the library in some way several times in our lifetime and some of us go weekly or semi-monthly on a regular basis.

In addition to books, we can get dozens of different items in the library: art for our home, magazines, audio books, CDs, videos, books for adult education, puppets, original local historical documents, musical instruments, telescopes, state park kits, birding backpacks, seed packets, memory kits for adults with dementia, talking books for visually or physically impaired, microfiche and microfilm of old newspapers and documents, plus more! Think of the money we're saving by borrowing the materials we need, not to mention the convenience of having so many materials available in one place, and all for free!

What would you do if this was all taken away? Of course, our first reaction is, "Well, we can find tons of information on the internet." You can also buy books and materials at a bookstore. But these days full-service bookstores are few and far between, so we resort to buying books online. Still, the joy of looking inside and reading a few pages is not always available, and books are expensive. Our library is free!

In the last few years, parents and politicians have been challenging book choices of public and school librarians, and the demands for removing not just one but many books have increased in all libraries. Libraries have procedures and policies in place for users to submit challenges of books they deem inappropriate for a library to hold.

As a librarian in a local public school, I had a book challenged by a parent. The school board procedure if a book was challenged was for the parent to fill out a form stating that they had read the entire book and what their objection was. Then the book was referred to a committee of school board members and parents who were instructed to read the book and make a decision as to whether the book would be useful to, and appropriate for, the children of the school. The book was allowed to stay in the library.

Regardless of the outcome, a process that was in place to give people a voice in whether a book or other material was appropriate for the intended audience had worked. However, that is not always the case.

Most of the books challenged in any town or city are in school libraries. However, many public libraries across the country are facing increasing book challenges, often with funding being threatened if targeted books aren't removed. Samuels Public Library in Front Royal, VA is one such example: In 2023, a group called *Clean Up Samuels* filed hundreds of challenges—many targeting LGBTQ+ books like *Gender Queer* and *Bathe the Cat*. The Board of Supervisors withheld 75% of the library's funding unless its

governance structure was changed. As of March 2025, funding remains blocked, and the library is in ongoing legal and governance disputes with the county (Washington Post, March 6, 2025). In 2022, Virginia saw 387 book titles challenged in libraries and schools combined—one of the highest totals in the U.S. ([American Library Association](#)).

With the current political climate of upending democratic values and institutions, we need to be prepared to defend our libraries, schools and the public, so that this institution can continue to contribute to the education, love of reading, and an informed populace in our local area and throughout Virginia.

From the UUFW Board

By Marilyn Nash, Board President

I want to keep you in the loop about what your dedicated and creative Board is working on. It's been a great start to the year, and I'm grateful to be serving alongside such a thoughtful team.



From left, Madeleine Dupre (secretary), Peggy Anders (treasurer), Clint Nicely (new member), Marilyn Nash (president), Mike Drumheller (new member), Jean St. Clair (vice president), Rev. Paul (non-voting member) and Nancy Trimble (serving her second year). Not pictured is Margo Kephart (non-voting past president).

In August, we held a Board retreat at Nancy's home to reflect, connect, and set priorities for the coming year. Here are a few of several initiatives we discussed:

🌿 Remembrance Garden: Members in our community have expressed interest in a space on our grounds for the burial of cremains. A task force, led by Peggy Anders, has been working diligently to explore what such a garden would entail. Their report will be completed and presented to the Board this fall.

🌍 Green Sanctuary Initiative: Caring for the environment is one of our UUFW values. A new task force has formed to explore how we can more fully live out this part of our mission. Garreth Bartholomew and Stephen Maxwell are co-leading this effort and are inviting others to join them. If you're interested, even for a short time, please contact them.

📣 Communication Improvements: We want to strengthen our communication with you. Here's how: (A) Transparency. Board minutes will now be posted on our website. Please feel free to reach out to any Board member with thoughts, ideas, or concerns. (B) Team Visibility. Our Fellowship is powered by [teams of dedicated UUFW volunteers](#)! You'll learn more about all of them at our upcoming Engagement Service. (C) Monthly Calendar Emails. Our administrative assistant, Savannah, will send a monthly calendar of UUFW activities right to your inbox. Be sure to check it out and mark your calendars!

💛 Building Community Together: Community is essential—especially in hard times. Whether you've been here for years or are new to UUFW, we're so grateful you're part of this Fellowship. We're excited to get to know each other better. The best way to connect? Get involved! Whether you have a little time or a lot, there's a place for you here.

