



# The CommUUnicator

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist  
Fellowship of Waynesboro

## New Member Spotlight

It's a Homecoming! That's what it feels like for **Lydia Petersson**, one of our newest members. A UU for most of her life, Lydia first became a member of UUFW in 1990. But as many of us know firsthand, time and the obligations and commitments of life—work and family and parenthood—intervened, and Lydia drifted away from active membership. Now retired, Lydia has again joined us and is looking forward to becoming more involved with the activities and programs at UUFW.

With family roots in the Midwest, Lydia grew up in Syracuse, NY. After high school and a few years of travel and work experience, Lydia landed at the University of Tennessee Knoxville, where she completed her undergraduate and master's degrees in English. UTK was also where she met John Gillies, who had recently returned from Afghanistan after four years of service in the Peace Corps. John, soon to become Lydia's husband, was pursuing a master's degree in agricultural economics. Degrees completed, John joined USAID and the couple moved to Honduras, where their first child, a daughter, was born. After two years they returned to Knoxville, and Lydia gave birth to their son.

Thirty-five years ago, they moved to the Valley where Lydia took a job at Mary



Baldwin, administering academic grants and undergraduate research, along with teaching writing and rhetoric, all the while completing her PhD at UVA. And while John, working in international education, travelled widely across four continents, Lydia was deeply involved in establishing the partnership between Mary Baldwin and the American Shakespeare

Center, and in building the Blackfriars Playhouse.

In 1998, the family moved to a farm north of Waynesboro, where they raised sheep and kept horses, along with what Lydia describes as “a vast menagerie of other animals.” Now, all these years later, they take care of “two elderly ewes, a couple of chickens, one cat, and a still sizable vegetable garden.” That farm, and a life philosophy based in the beliefs of service and the values of UUism, proved to be a great combination for raising kids, kids of whom Lydia and John are “immensely proud.” And with good reason: Their daughter and son, as well as their spouses, are all filmmakers, widely celebrated for their recent film *500 Fireflies*, and, perhaps more familiar to us, for their PBS series *Life in the Heartland* (Season 3 premieres October 2).

Retired, with grandkids in school and fewer animals to tend—notwithstanding the demands of maintaining a century-old

farmhouse and structures—Lydia is looking forward to becoming a more active participant in UUFW. She has a particular interest in religious education for both children and adults and in interfaith understanding and cooperation. We are fortunate to have Lydia Petersson as a new (and former) member, and are so pleased to welcome her back to our congregation.

**Judi and Steve Keller** are living examples that romance can bloom at any age. Both of them had lived the single life in Southern California for 30 years before they met and fell in love. Up until then, Judi had a career as a legal secretary, and Steve worked primarily as a respiratory therapist in a hospital. Steve had practiced law in California but realized the medical field better suited his personality.

Judi and Steve married in 2006, and at some point, they decided to leave the traffic and high cost of living in California. Respiratory therapists are always in demand, so Steve became a traveling RT. Their first adventure was to live in Alaska for several months. Their next assignment led them to Missouri and finally to Virginia.

Looking for a city on the East Coast to lay down some roots, they discovered Staunton while driving from DC to Florida and back. Something clicked, and they felt they were meant to be here. After a year in Harrisonburg, they moved to Staunton permanently in 2010.

From 2009 until he retired two years ago, Steve was an RT at RMH (now Sentara). Judi has provided care for the special-needs child of a friend for many years, as well as occasional care for other acquaintances. It keeps both of them busy and on their toes.

Judi and Steve love to travel. Last year they had a wonderful cruise around New Zealand. They love musicals and occasionally go to DC for special performances. Steve enjoys golfing and board games. They are both Kansas City Chiefs fans and avid gardeners.

When Steve retired, they began to look around for a church to attend. Judi had some knowledge of Unitarian Universalism and had looked at our website. Upon attending the first time several months ago, they felt an immediate connection. Let's make sure they feel welcomed as new members.



## Waynesboro Prism

The second annual Waynesboro Pride event, Prism, was held on Saturday, September 27. Rain forced the event indoors at Basic City Beer Company. That did not diminish the fun and enthusiastic support for the LGBTQ+ community. UUFW volunteers were there with our brochures and handouts, ready to answer any questions about our Fellowship. Our next outreach event will be the Staunton Pride Festival on October 11.

