



BULL RUN
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS

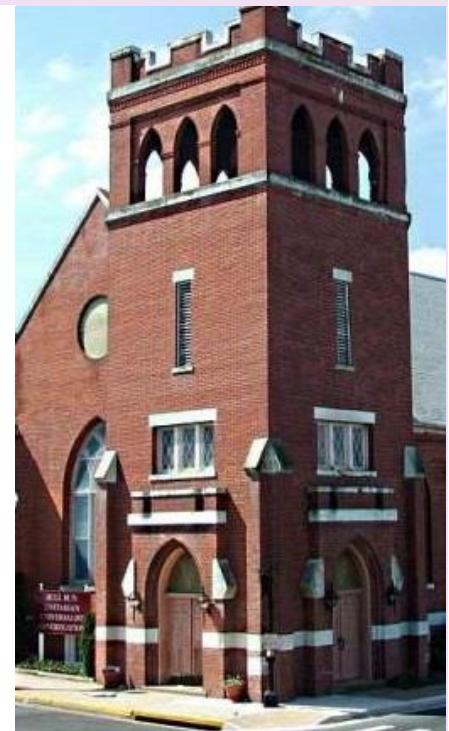
February 2026
Volume 44, Issue 2

Crossroads



Winter storms covered our region – and BRUU's front door!

- with heavy snow in January, delaying the February
Crossroads newsletter... until now



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- February Services
- From the President's Desk
- What the heck is Pluralism and how do I try to do it?
- Did you know? About next door...
- New Group to BRUU
- Membership News
- Events At & Around BRUU
- Chrysalis Concert Series
- Contact Information

The monthly BRUU Newsletter



February Services

February 1: Return to Covenant: Introducing the Healthy Congregation Team

(The Healthy Congregation Team) - As Unitarian-Universalists, we have a covenantal religion, and our congregation even has a covenant, but what does it mean to be in covenant with one another? What could that mean for us individually and as a congregation? The BRUU Healthy Congregation Team will introduce itself and talk about what these mean in both practical and spiritual terms.

February 8: Building Muscle and Questioning Everything: The Violence of Transformation

(Luther Saylor) - How physical exercise can serve as an allegory for our efforts to continue strengthening our understanding of ourselves and our world.

February 15: Awakening (Rev. Kimberley Debus) - We are in a transformational moment - not only in our nation but in our faith. What does transformation in progress look like? What happens when we are awakened?

February 22: "What's Your Lifeline? Reflections on how we respond to troubling times"

(Bill Fogarty)

From the President's Desk

Josh Rachford, President, BRUU Board of Directors

I turned 40 in December. Before that, I took our family on vacation the week before Christmas, scrambled to learn my part for the Christmas Eve service, and then got completely slammed when I came back. Perhaps you noticed I missed the last two newsletters? So naturally, when I returned to work after all that, my employer sent me stickers.

Not just any stickers - culture stickers. Our new corporate values, freshly piloted in a subset of the workforce, now available in adhesive form. I stared at them thinking: is this how you change culture? With stickers? What actually changes culture is what gets rewarded, what leaders model, what behavior we reinforce in practice. You can't pilot values like you pilot a product feature. You can't stick them on your laptop and call it transformation.

It got me thinking about BRUU. What would our culture stickers say? We have a congregational covenant - our stated values. But are those our real operating mantras? What do we actually reward and model in practice?

Solvers, Not Critics

Here's what I've noticed: the people who make things happen here don't wait for stickers or permission slips. Star Muir saw that while we've been able to come together to create meaningful celebrations of life, doing so ad hoc each time wasn't sustainable. He didn't just observe the challenge - he brought me a proposal to create a standing response team. That's how culture evolves. That's taking ownership.

Luther Saylor is a relatively new member. He's already putting on services and jumping into committees. Jon Cox joined and immediately got involved with the Membership Committee. Several new people have joined the choir over the last few months. They're not waiting to understand every detail of how things work - they're finding where they can contribute and doing it.

The Christmas Eve service, Christmas dinner, the workday - all created by people pulling together, people who saw what needed doing and did it. That's the culture we need more of.

President's Desk, continued

Where We Actually Are

I've heard some people feel the ministerial search is taking a long time. Here's what's actually happening:

- Our job posting is live and attracting attention
- The UUA profile is nearly complete - we're making final revisions based on feedback and then it goes live for ministers searching for congregations

The committee is finalizing the interview process so we're ready when candidates start coming through

The search committee is doing excellent work, and the process is moving forward well.

Building What's Possible

We'll be talking a lot over the next few months about stewardship and our aspirational budget. When we built the budget for the current fiscal year, we planned for a part-time minister for half the year. For our aspirational budget for next year, we're setting our collective sights on the salary to support a full-time minister. The question isn't "what's the minimum we need to survive?" It's "what's possible if we commit?"

Culture doesn't evolve through stickers or slogans. It evolves when we embody our values in practice. When we see needs and bring solutions. When we focus on what we can create rather than what we're missing.

Your Role

Be a solver. When you see something that needs doing, ask "what can I do about this?" before asking "why isn't someone else doing this?"

Take ownership of something - one committee, one project, one way to contribute. Don't wait to be asked. And if you're already deeply committed, it's okay to focus on doing that one thing well rather than stretching yourself too thin.

When the stewardship campaign launches, think about what's possible, not just what's required.

President's Desk, continued

We have the people. We have the energy. We have new members jumping in and long-time members stepping up. The question is whether we choose abundance or scarcity, solutions or criticism, ownership or waiting.

The culture we want doesn't come from stickers. It comes from this.

In service and solidarity,

Josh Rachford

President, BRUU Board of Directors

What the heck is Pluralism and how do I try to do it?

Kristin Worthington, Director of Lifespan Religious Education

At the January Adult Life Enrichment (ALE) Monday, a few of us explored how to embrace pluralism in our everyday lives.

The language of our Shared Values states: *We celebrate that we are all sacred beings diverse in culture, theology and experience. We covenant to learn from one another and openly explore the depth and breadth of our many wisdoms. We embrace our differences and commonalities with love, curiosity and respect.*

But what does that mean? We might begin by stating that a person cannot "be pluralistic." Pluralism is an action word. Pluralism is something we do, something we practice.

And I do mean practice. Please give yourself and others some grace. Our covenants are aspirational in some sense. The Values are our guideposts that we strive to embody through our own inner work of study and understanding. We can look inward at any given time to identify and acknowledge our relationship with pluralism—to identify where we can learn more and make small changes over time. It's a process of action and reflection, learning and new action, new reflection. Repeat. Each one of us comes from different experiences and is at a different stage of personal and spiritual growth. Where you are right now is exactly where you are supposed to be. By covenanting to the Shared Values, however, we make the promise to engage in continual learning. This requires vulnerability and bravery.

Welcome and Inclusion

Let's begin with welcome and inclusion. We practice this when we say "All are welcome here." It generally represents a place that does not block participation regardless of color, race, sexuality, gender identity, etc. Welcoming creates diversity.

Inclusion goes further—providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized. Inclusion bleeds into equity in the sense that practicing inclusion means making sure that a person who has bad knees is provided a chair they can easily stand up from or that a non-English speaker is provided

Pluralism, continued

materials that allow them to understand in their own language—addressing things the majority may take for granted. Inclusion requires going out of our way a little bit to provide for others.

Welcoming says "door's open!" Inclusion says "and I've moved obstacles out of your way so that you can participate fully and comfortably."

From Diversity to Pluralism

Diversity is the fact that people with different identities share space with each other. A diverse dinner party may have 10 people from 10 different countries eating a ham dinner. When the conversation turns to each diner sharing their mom's favorite ham recipe, then you have engagement in diversity. Pluralism means the diners are genuinely curious about why one family glazes with honey while another uses cloves, why one culture serves ham at Easter while another reserves it for New Year's. Pluralism means noticing that one person isn't eating the ham at all—and respectfully asking about their dietary practice, learning it comes from their faith tradition, and ensuring the next gathering includes options that honor everyone's needs. Diversity is a demographic fact. Pluralism is an accomplishment.

While engaging in diversity, you will likely find other opinions or experiences that are not like your own. That's okay. And kinda the point. Respect does not mean agreement. Respect for others means approaching them with curiosity. Respect for self means maintaining personal boundaries and values.

Pluralism is Bridgebuilding

Our case study at ALE Monday was the story of a police chief and gang member who teamed up ([watch here](#)). Antony Lucky says: "So, what we are teaching is you have to understand and accept the fact that we all see it very differently. That we all can look at the same thing and arrive at a different conclusion—but that's okay. The risk of not taking this advice is you stay stuck in your own silos, and your own echo chamber, and you are never challenged to rise above the occasion. When you are willing to change your position, but don't compromise your principles, you open up a world of possibilities that

Pluralism, continued

you didn't know exist. This is why we do this—that we all have a part to play."

Bridgebuilding requires us to talk about our differences—to say them out loud and meaningfully acknowledge the places where our experiences and worldviews diverge or sit in tension with each other—and this probably doesn't mean beginning with the biggest or most challenging differences first, but rather acknowledging our less contentious differences right away to engage and appreciate our diverse worldviews.

Read this month's Round Ups for suggestions to practice Pluralism. This week, try this: Watch one or two movies that center a person or group from an identity different than yours. Perhaps the one that you previously passed over thinking that you wouldn't understand. Press play and be curious about the ways your experiences may be different.



Did You Know? About next door...

Cathy Ring, BRUU Building & Grounds Lease Coord

When our congregation purchased this church property from the Manassas United Methodist Church back in 1981, we were looking for a permanent home for our services and activities. What we didn't realize when we made our initial inquiry about purchasing the church & classroom building that surrounded the courtyard, was not the entire property. The two story, historic commercial building on Main Street was also included in the property purchase. We didn't have a plan for the commercial building but the purchase was a "doable" price for a very visible downtown location.

When we arranged the financing there was a small surfboard & paraphernalia shop renting the first floor. The second floor offices were being used for a group of non-profit social services agencies, who had arranged for the space with the Methodists, rent free. Both upstairs and downstairs are approximately a thousand square feet each. Because the building is used for commercial purposes BRUU does pay real estate tax on that piece of our property.

Over the years these spaces have been occupied by several different entities, and BRUU has invested in upgrades and general maintenance of the facilities and utilities as needed and/or requested. The current Grounds Central coffee shop has been the downstairs tenant for more than a dozen years. The business owner (Matt Brower) had let BRUU know that if the upstairs were to become available he would be interested in expanding into that space. Recently the upstairs office renter, at the expiration of that lease, decided to become a home office business.

BRUU has signed a new lease with Grounds Central for it to create an interior access, do some remodeling, and begin renting the upstairs space. This coffee shop expansion has been featured in *The Prince William Times*, the "Discovery" newspaper, and several of the internet news venues.

We expect that Grounds Central will continue to be a prosperous business going forward, and encourage everyone's patronage to support our continued rental income.

New Group to BRUU

Cathy Ring

Beginning in January we have new group using our building for their monthly meetings. The local chapter of Red Wine & Blue is part of a non-partisan organization, proclaiming themselves to be a diverse community of women standing up to extremism across Virginia. By building meaningful relationships for engaging in and organizing to support mutual community initiatives. This group does not charge membership dues so they have no treasury. However, they do support several local Food Pantries by collecting food goods and collecting money for pantries to purchase items needed to stock the shelves. The group has offered to bring food to our BRUU Pantry each month.

If you are interested in more information on this organization:

<https://www.redwine.blue/virginia>

Membership News

Nina Lomax

Sunday February 15—New to BRUU class

11:30 am -1pm conference room

a little BRUU history and covenant, organization, volunteer ops, a little UU introduction-values and principles, path to membership

RSVP to membership@bruu.org limited seating

If you are hosting an auction event and you have an open slot OR if you are unable to attend one you purchased, please email membership@bruu.org or call Nina to let us pick a visitor/newbie to take your spot.

Events At & Around BRUU



The BRUU songwriter working group is being reimagined.....

STANZA is a creative collective that will meet at BRUU every month. Stanza is for songwriters, poets, and storytellers who believe in the power of words to connect, heal, inspire and entertain.

Whether you're scribbling lyrics on napkins, crafting poems in the margins of your journal, or spinning tales that deserve to be heard, this is your space.

We're not here to impress—we're here to express. We celebrate raw creativity, honest emotion, and the courage to share. This is an opportunity to share your work, get feedback and help others hone their writing skills.

Join us on the 1st Sunday of every month in the Music Room (11:30-1:00).

BRUU's Biblical Discussion Group

FEBRUARY 1---SUNDAY---9:00 AM---Flamingo Lounge

Why Does the Bible Have Only Four Gospels?

Why not all of them?



We'll explore gospels as a genre and their "harmonization" and "univocality". Martin Crim will lead a discussion on how the gospels came to be written, why only four, and how they are different.

Come join the discussion!



And bring your questions!

Fun ? Fellowship ? Service ?
Let's shape the Future!

Sunday, February 15 11:30 am
Flamingo Lounge

YOUNG ADULTS

AGES 18-30



Please RSVP for Brunch! dre@bruu.org

Second Sunday Hike on February 8

We will explore Leopold's Preserve in Haymarket between 1:00-3:00pm. The hike will be led by naturalist volunteers at the Preserve and include discussions of local ecology. Distance will be 2-3 miles, at an easy pace, on natural surface trails. Well-behaved dogs on a leash are welcome. Hey, ya never know what you might see. Join us, make new friends, get some exercise, learn stuff.

Chrysalis Series Presents:

AMY SPEACE

Known for soul-stirring lyrics and captivating performances, Amy delivers an unforgettable evening of beauty and emotion.

Feb 27, 2026, 7:30 pm

Bull Run UU Congregation | 9350 Main Street
Manassas VA 20110

Tickets: \$20.00 in Advance | \$25 at the door.



BRUU Midweek Coffee Hour - 10am Wednesdays

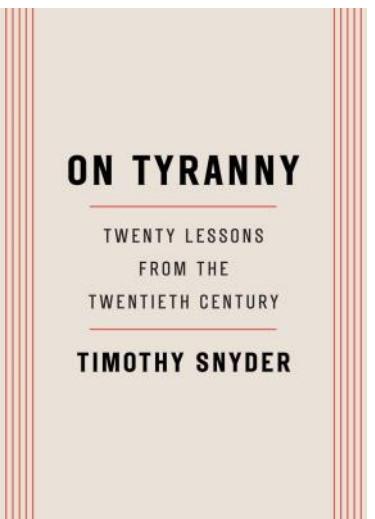


- Visit with old friends and make new ones
- Share your joys, concerns and insights
- Discuss serious topics and not so serious ones.
- Start your day off with a smile and a laugh or two!

10am-11:30am every Wednesday on Zoom. Feel free to drop in at any time. Contact Gordon Ward for links at midweekcoffee@bruu.org .

Join the BRUU Book Group!

On February 16th at 3:30, our book club will discuss "On Tyranny - Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century" by Timothy Snyder. New members are welcome. Discussion can still be stimulating even if life got in the way and someone has not read much of the book. To get the Zoom link, contact us at bookgroup@bruu.org



Pastoral Care



One of our strengths as a congregation is how we care for one another.

Please reach out to us at pastoralcare@bruu.org and let us know if there is a need within our community, so that we may coordinate with caring volunteers within BRUU.



Chrysalis Concert Series at BRUU

October 2025-September 2026 season



Sam Robbins - 10/17/2025

Transport yourself back to the golden era of singer-songwriters with the soulful tunes of Sam Robbins. Hailing from Boston, Sam's music draws inspiration from legends like James Taylor and Neil Young, blending timeless melodies with a contemporary twist that will captivate your heart.

<https://samrobbinsmusic.com/>



Nothin' Fancy - 12/6/2025

Experience the magic of a live performance by Nothin' Fancy in the heart of Manassas! Join us for an unforgettable evening filled with soul-warming Bluegrass music that will leave you feeling uplifted and inspired. This is an opportunity to witness the phenomenal talent of a beloved band that has captured the hearts of audiences everywhere. Don't miss your chance to be swept away by the incredible sounds of Nothin' Fancy - it's an experience you'll remember long after the final note fades away.



<https://www.nothinfancybluegrass.com/>



Greg Greenway - 1/10/2026

Greg is a cherished performer in many UU communities, and especially at BRUU. His talents defy categorization as he seamlessly blends musical genres and shares poignant insights on global events. Greg's performances serve as a reminder that we are all interconnected as citizens of the world. Come be inspired to embrace our ability to effect change. Don't miss this extraordinary opportunity to experience his artistry once again.

<https://www.greggreenway.com/>

Amy Speace - 2/27/2026

Get ready for an enchanting musical experience with the talented Amy Speace. Known for her soul-stirring lyrics and captivating performances, Amy's music has the power to take you on a transformative journey. With heartfelt songs that resonate deeply, Amy Speace's live performance promises an unforgettable evening filled with beauty and emotion.



<https://www.amyspeace.com/>

Joe Jencks - 4/10/2026

Spend an evening with award-winning musician Joe Jencks, a favorite performer in many UU communities. Joe was the opening performer for the Chrysalis Concert Series back in April 2023 and we're delighted he's coming back to see us again. Joe's profound music is sure to leave a lasting impact offering a night filled with beautiful melodies, social consciousness, and spiritual exploration.



<https://joejencks.com/>

Billy Jonas - 5/23/2026

Join Billy Jonas on a musical journey that began around a campfire in 1972 and has since blossomed into a profound experience of connectedness and musical camaraderie. Through his soul-stirring vocals, mesmerizing guitar skills, and innovative use of industrial percussion, he creates an unforgettable performance that resonates with audiences of all ages. Don't miss this opportunity to be part of the Bucket Brigade and immerse yourself in the beauty of live music that touches the soul and brings people together in harmony.



<https://www.billyjonas.com/>



Circle of Toads - 8/15/2026

Embark on a fun musical ride with Circle of Toads - a favorite BRUU band that brings together a unique and diverse mix of talents. Dave, Bill, Kel, and Mike have been playing together since 2023, combining their individual musical backgrounds to create a one-of-a-kind sound that resonates with audiences all around Manassas. Experience an eclectic blend of folk, rock, and original pieces that are sure to captivate your senses. A great way to wrap up the summer.

<https://www.facebook.com/p/Circle-of-Toads-6156570008114/>



Chris Haddox - 9/15/2026

Help us welcome this talented artist from West Virginia. With heartfelt lyrics and soulful melodies, his performances are a blend of tradition and contemporary flair that captivate audiences of all ages. Prepare to be taken on a rollercoaster of emotions as each song is a testament to Haddox's ability to weave intricate yet relatable stories that resonate deep within the soul. Join in on the experience and let the music speak to you in ways you never imagined.

<https://www.chrishaddoxmusic.com/>

Get your tickets here:



**From the
Treasurer's Office**

Links for donating to BRUU



BRUU can receive online charitable donations via Zelle, Stripe or Paypal. You can use these services for your pledge payment (supporting our operational expenses), food pantry or community assistance donations, capital fund contributions, Sunday and split-the-plate, or any of our special collections and fundraisers. When donating online, you may use the comments section to specify your designation.

If you have questions or concerns just send us a note. Thanks!

Heather Berthold, Treasurer,
treasurer@bruu.org

Robin Fegeas et al, Bookkeepers,
bookkeeper@bruu.org

BRUU

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BRUU Board of Directors

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BRUU OFFICE HOURS

M-F 10:00 am – 2:00 pm
2nd and 4th Tuesdays 12:00 pm-2:00 pm