

Planning Vital Life Events

An Overview of Support Services Offered by Unitarian Universalist Church in Reston



Unitarian Universalist Church in Reston – 1625 Wiehle Avenue – Reston, VA
www.uureston.org

Of the many groups and organizations you participate in, your church should be among the primary supports systems for you and your family at times of serious illness or death. This winter here at UUCR we began several support services related to the planning of vital life events. This pamphlet offers an overview of these initiatives. We encourage you to take advantage of these support services as they apply to you.

Background

First, a reminder about UUCR's recent four-part Adult Faith Development program on "End-of-Life Planning: A Gift to Your Family," part of Adult Faith Development, which we offered in January and February. Led by Rev, Barbara, Courtney Wilson, Eileen Roehr, Lee Norrgard, and Joyce Kirk, these four sessions included information about hospice, final arrangements, important health documents, the grief process, and guidance on defining one's personal spiritual views on death and dying. All four sessions were well attended and many of you who participated reflected on how useful the programs were. We strongly encourage you to advocate for a repeat of this program next year and to attend any sessions in which you did not participate this year.

While attendance at this Adult Faith program this winter was strong, most persons who participated were of a "certain age." We cannot emphasize strongly enough that preparing documents recording vital life information is for everyone: persons of any age can benefit from conversations with your loved ones and your faith community about this very human condition of preparing for end of life. You give your family and other loved ones a gift, sparing them pain and indecision, by having plans and paperwork in place. You can always revise any plans as life circumstances change.

Ongoing Support Services

In addition to this AFD program just concluded, there will be a new initiative available this spring: UUCR's new repository system. This program will allow each member to set up a file in which to store personal documents relevant to end-of-life issues. This record-keeping system offers practical support as well as emotional and spiritual peace of mind. Please note: this repository program is for members only, paralleling the access to rites of passage (child dedications, weddings, memorials and funerals) held here at UUCR free of charge, all of these services part of the 'meaning of membership.'

Practically, you may include in these files any documents you wish. We recommend several --- an End of Life Planning Form, a Memorial Service form, and the UUCR Memorial Policy (currently in draft form) --- which will be distributed as attachments in future weekly eBlasts. You may also wish to include other documents such as a list of family contacts, a living will, contact information for your professional service providers, and more. You may also want to keep in your file copies of other vital information, photos, small memorabilia, and more. This material will be kept in the UUCR office, in a fireproof filing cabinet.

Next Steps

To set up your personal file, please schedule a fifteen-minute appointment with UUCR Office Manager Beth DiPasquale (officemanager@uureston.org), who will oversee our secure and private file storage. As you can, you may want to bring to that initial meeting any forms already completed and deposit them to your file. Each time you add a new document, you will receive a copy to include in your own records at home. Across the years, you will also be reminded periodically to update your files as your personal information changes.

Of course, making plans for illness and end-of-life is also a deeply spiritual matter. As you create your files, we also encourage each find time to consult with UUCR's Minister and other professional staff on these important and often very personal and sensitive topics. A conversation on these topics will also be a good way to get acquainted with your next Minister starting in the fall.

Workshop Scheduled for April 16th

Additionally, the spiritual support we get from each other is invaluable, and as such UUCR is providing an opportunity for us to come together to work on these documents in an atmosphere of good humor and encouragement. Coinciding with National Health Decisions Day, we will meet to work on our documents on Saturday April 16, from 10 a.m. to noon, here in the UUCR Sanctuary. In attending this workshop, you will find it useful to bring relevant information, such as addresses and phone numbers of loved ones, account numbers, names of your professional services such as doctors, etc. Bring any forms you have started or completed. We will also have forms here for you to complete. All the readings and materials used in the End-of-Life program will also be available for you to reference. However, please note that we are not offering legal advice: instead this time together will provide institutional and spiritual support.

Beth DiPasquale has agreed to re-arrange her usual work schedule to be present at this Saturday session to answer questions about filing methods and to schedule appointments. She has a limited number of appointments available on April 16. If you believe you will be ready to set up a file and would like to meet with Beth then, please schedule your appointment in advance of the April 16 gathering. Rev Barbara and others from the team who offered the Adult Faith class will also be present.

We are pleased that we could initiate this End-of-Life program during this interim ministry. From interviews and conversations with many of you, we understood that this was a topic many in the congregation were eager to learn more about, and high attendance at the four programs this winter certainly proved that true. I do hope that you will keep this program going in the coming years. It is indeed a Gift to Your Family to have your own vital affairs in order.