



The Flaming Chalice

THEOLOGICALLY DIVERSE • RADICALLY INCLUSIVE • JUSTICE CENTERED

Starr King Unitarian Universalist Church | April 2020 Newsletter



CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Due to COVID-19 shelter-in-place orders, the church office is closed until further notice and Kelli is working from home. For pastoral care, please reach out to Rev. Maria Cristina via email or phone (617)895-9267.

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Newsletter

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Join us every Sunday at 10:30 am for worship online using zoom. Click on this link <https://zoom.us/j/708318542> or dial (669)900-6833 then enter 708 318 542. New to zoom? Go here for more information: <https://starrking.org/zoom>. Please reach out to us directly if you need further assistance so we can provide technical support.

This Sunday, April 5th, we welcome guest preacher, Rev. Szabó, Starr King School for the Ministry's Balázs Scholar.

Special Message from the Minister

Beloveds, we just learned that the shelter-in-place order has been extended to May 3. The church building will be closed until then. This means some of the events described in this newsletter will not occur at the specified location, and possibly not at that time either. We will let you know as more detailed plans unfold.

Making the best of the current situation has called for a creative adaptability, responding moment by moment with imagination and flexibility and love. In this spirit, we have not planned worship services ahead, and instead will create each one for the moment, using the best tools we have and “experilearning” as we go. I ask for your understanding, your generosity, and your assistance as we travel this path together.



We will continue to meet and worship via Zoom, and to hold each other in love with phone calls, social media, and Zoom-based gatherings. All my energy and attention is on pastoral care, especially for our elders and other vulnerable individuals, and on families, because of the unique challenges facing our families at this time. We had planned to spend this time working together to envision and design our new family ministry; instead we are practicing family ministry in creative new ways. We are doing it instead of talking about it. When the world returns to some semblance of normalcy, we will see where we are, and make new plans.

Until then, please know you are in my heart and in my prayers. I want to hear how you are! You can write to me at minister@starring.org, or call me for pastoral care requests at (617)895-9267.

– Rev. María Cristina



When this is over,
may we never again
take for granted
A handshake with a stranger
Full shelves at the store
Conversations with neighbors
A crowded theatre
Friday night out
The taste of communion
A routine checkup
The school rush each morning
Coffee with a friend
The stadium roaring
Each deep breath
A boring Tuesday
Life itself.

When this ends,
may we find
that we have become
more like the people
we wanted to be
we were called to be
we hoped to be
and may we stay
that way—better
for each other
because of the worst.

WHAT'S INSIDE

1 Sunday Services

4 Community Artwork

5 From the Minister

7 Bits from the Board

9 Envisioning the Future

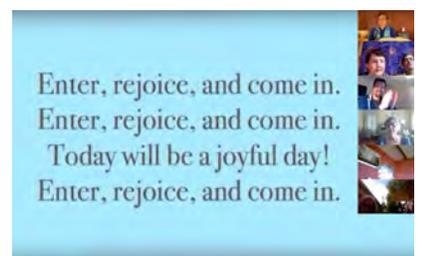
13 RE Reflections

14 Life Care Planning

15 Ongoing Activities

16 Calendar and Birthdays

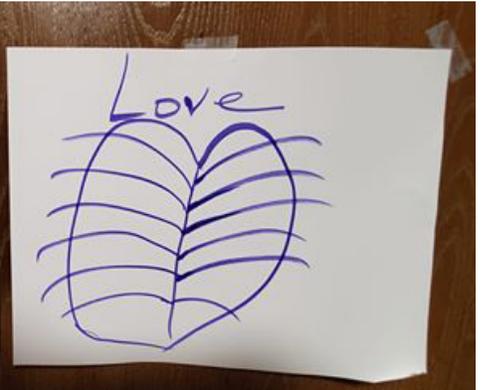
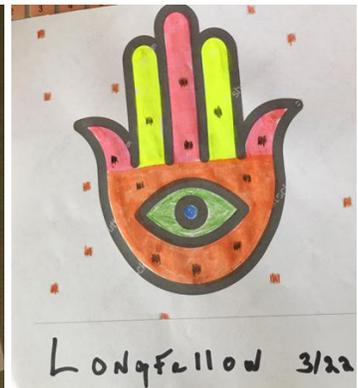
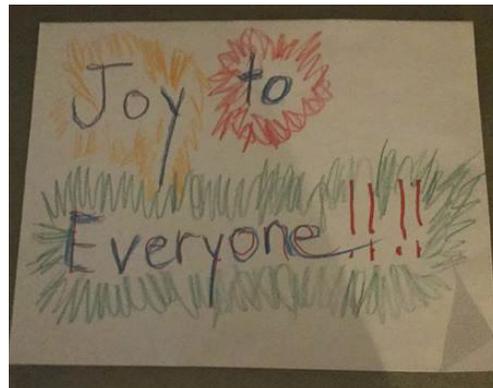
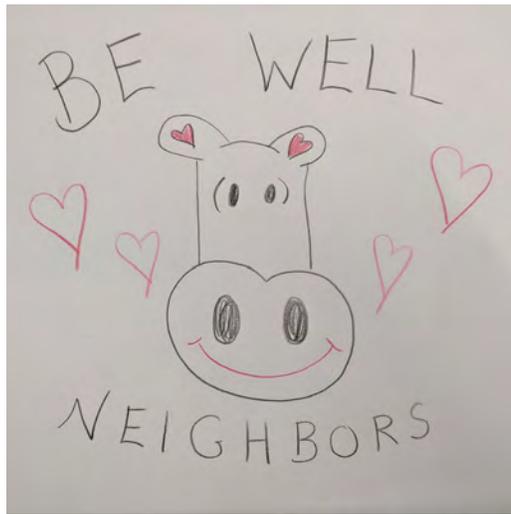
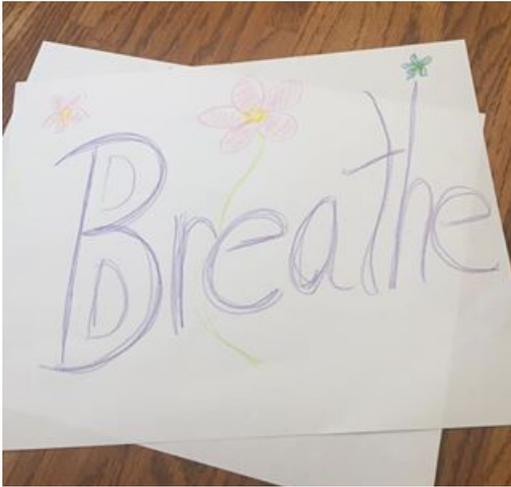
March Highlights



Rev Maria Cristina enjoying the natural beauty of the Starr King garden during social distancing

The show must go on! Virtual Sunday services via Zoom

Art from the March 22nd Service



From the Minister

Beloveds,

We are into the fourth week of sheltering in place and so many things have changed in such a short amount of time. Schools, businesses, and churches are closed, groceries store shelves are empty of essential items, neighborhood playgrounds are empty of children's laughter, and physical distancing is taking a toll on all of us.

During this time of uncertainty, some are hospitalized, some convalescing, some grieving the loss of a beloved parent, and most of us are struggling to adjust on a daily basis to this "new normal." It feels like the ground is shifting and that there are very few answers right now.

And yet in so many ways, this crisis has also given us opportunities. New and creative opportunities to communicate, to gather as a community, and to lift our spirits. In some ways, I have never felt so connected to my family, friends, and church community. We have rallied together to check in on each other and offer support to the most vulnerable among us. For me, making phone calls to members, mailing cards and care packages to families, driving by members' homes to say hello from my car, delivering groceries, posting pictures of the church garden, participating in virtual family story hour, posting inspirational quotes on our Facebook church member group page, and of course planning and leading Sunday worship, have all been such wonderful ways to keep connected. Now more than ever, I feel blessed to be your Minister! Please know that although the church office might be closed until further notice, I am available for pastoral care via phone or zoom anytime. I encourage you to reach out by phone or email. (617) 895-9267.

If you were not able to join us for worship last Sunday, here is an excerpt of the inspirational readings we shared:

From my friend Belen Sampayo, Therapist and Buddhist practitioner:

"It is ok to be afraid, to get mad, to feel vulnerable.

We must validate our feelings. It's the only way to process what we are going through. Our feelings are temporary and life is all about change. The more we resist change, the more difficult everything becomes. There is strength in vulnerability, in knowing that all I need to do is to accept change. Accepting what is gives me strength to manage change. Each one at our own pace. Little by little, poco a poco, we will get through this. We have each other."

And from Buddhist teacher Pema Chodron:

"Bodhicitta means noble or awakened heart ...Bodhicitta awakens through kinship with the suffering of others...Those who train in awakening Bodhicitta are called Bodhisattvas or warriors, warriors who hear the cries of the world...a warrior accepts that we can never know what will happen to us next. We can try to

control the uncontrollable by looking for security and predictability, always hoping to be comfortable and safe, but the truth is that we can never avoid uncertainty... this not knowing is part of the adventure. The central question of a warrior's training is not how we avoid uncertainty and fear but how do we relate to discomfort? How do we practice while experiencing difficult emotions, dealing with the unpredictable encounters of an ordinary day? Uncomfortable feelings are messages that tell us to perk up and lean into a situation when we'd rather back away...We have an opportunity...ordinarily we are swept away by habitual momentum. We don't interrupt our patterns even slightly. With practice we learn to stay with a broken heart, with fear.. sticking with uncertainty is how we learn to relax in the midst of chaos... how we learn to be cool when the ground beneath us suddenly disappears...We can bring ourselves back to the spiritual path countless times every day simply by exercising our willingness to rest in the uncertainty of the present moment over and over again..." Pema Chodron, *Comfortable with Uncertainty*.

– Rev. María Cristina



Bits from the Board

Focal Points and Trying Something New

In these days of global health challenges and uncertainty with the coronavirus, your Board has been working closely with Reverenda and staff in responding quickly in ways that keep our congregation safe. We cancelled Hospitality (i.e. coffee) Hour starting March 8 and, as of this writing, we are about to begin providing virtual services starting March 15. What a big leap in a short period of time! And **many thanks** are offered to **Reverend María Cristina and the Executive Team** for responding so quickly. Deep gratitudes also go out to the team, including **Reverenda, Reverend Lewis, the Castles, and Beth Ogilvie**, that quickly put together our first online service. It is our commitment to each other that creates opportunities for us to be creative in how we keep connection. Nice work, all!



Additionally, the Executive Team has put together a draft *“Phased Coronavirus Response Outline for Starr King UU Church”* based on guidelines provided by the UUA from a recent webinar and which we are using to guide our decisions.

I also think it’s important to remember what we have in common and what we are currently focusing.

...We support one another in our search for spiritual and religious meaning and are committed to working for justice in the larger community.

We are:

Theologically Diverse

Radically Inclusive

Justice Centered

and we do so in covenant with each other. In other words, how we do what we do is equally important to what we do.

Current Board Focal Points

Long term financial sustainability: The canvass and finalizing next year’s budget in preparation for our Annual Meeting on May 17.

Supporting the successful transition of Children’s Religious Education.
The Envisioning Team is now the R.E.-envisioning Team!

Responding to the coronavirus quickly and communicating clearly.

Celebrating and strengthening community: I'm happy to announce that Vice President/President Elect Roy Dickerson will be the point person in coordinating *Congregational Actions* that build trust and connections with each other and within the community through our collective actions. He'll be inviting us to participate in actions such as preparing and serving meals at the shelter, our service auction, and the "Get Out the Vote" campaign. Look for more on this initiative in the future!

Presenting Proposed Changes to the Bylaws – Congregational Discussion

At the Annual Meeting on May 17, the congregation will be asked to vote on proposed bylaws changes, including reducing the size of the Board. So as to better inform you and to answer any questions you may have, we'll be hosting a presentation and have a congregational discussion: **Sunday, May 3, 2020 via Zoom**. Also, our next Board meeting date has been changed to **Thursday, April 23 at 7pm via Zoom**. We welcome your participation.

**Those are the bits from your board this month –
In gratitude for our beloved community**

– Jennifer Koney



Envisioning the Future - Living Into The Future

Our Vision



To be a spiritual community for our time:

Theologically Diverse

Radically Inclusive

Justice Centered



The Deliver Phase of our Envisioning Process has begun. You'll recall that we used the **4 – D** Appreciative Inquiry (AI) Process to: **Discover** our best moments; **Dreams** for the future; **Design** what that future could be, and then Deliver it. You'll recall that we used AI because:

- It builds on “the best of the past” and captures the dreams of the future we want to create.
- We have all the wisdom and skills needed to envision the future.
- People respond more to the positive than to the negative and will work toward what they have helped create.
- There are many “right” pathways to reach a given point or end result.
- None of us has all the answers; we need each other’s perspective of reality to get a better understanding of the whole.
- The future doesn’t just happen. It results in large part from what we do or don’t do today and every day.
- Each one of us
 - Can make a difference
 - Learn from each other
 - Pool our perceptions, and
 - Agree to take charge of our future

Thus, we confirmed that our Vision, Values, and Mission would guide our future.



Our Values

**Radical Hospitality, Welcoming, Multiculturalism,
Inclusion, Celebrating diversity**



Lived Out Through:

Spirituality

Church Community

Education, Exploration, Learning

Justice, Social activism

Service

Compassion, Caring, Love

Friendship, Fun

Joy, Gratitude

Our Mission

Starr King Unitarian Universalist Church is a welcoming congregation that strives to foster respect and compassion for all people and a reverence for nature. We support one another in our search for spiritual and religious meaning and are committed to working for justice in the larger community



The Envisioning Team is a collaboration of the Minister, the Board of Trustees, and the Committee on Ministry, practicing shared ministry and leadership together. We are pleased to report on the activities in which we have been and are engaged in to **Live out our Mission and Vision.**

Theological Diversity

- Sessions on New to UU or Born to UU have been postponed due to the Coronavirus
- Expanded sessions on Buddhism and Hinduism are planned for fall
- Family Ministry – see below

Radical Inclusion

- Book Group Discussions:
 - *Centering: Navigating Race, Authenticity, and Power in Ministry*
 - *What Does it Mean to be White: Developing White Racial Literacy*
 - *Mistake and Miracles: Congregations on the Road to Multiculturalism*
- The Rev. Nancy Palmer, minister at San Jose UU and co-author of *Mistakes and Miracles*, preached and led a discussion following the service

- Completing the process to re-certify as a Welcoming Congregation
- Participating now in a Video Conference – Transforming Hearts Collective: Trans Inclusion in Congregations (Held on first and third Monday's, 7:00 to 9:00 (now via Zoom)
- Family Ministry – see below

Justice Centered

- Investigation underway to explore the feasibility of Solar Panels
- Volunteers are arranging to provide a meal for SHP at First Presbyterian Church, Castro Valley
- Continue with quarterly food donations to SHP
- Peace and Justice Action Team (PAJAT) have researched IRS rules regarding Issue Advocacy, Lobbying, and Individual Activity.
- Family Ministry –see below
- PAJAT will participate in the UUA Vote – see link below.
<https://www.uua.org/justice/vote2020>
- The Board endorsed the Schools and Community First Initiative – A good read to combat the untruthful material that will be sent by those opposing the Initiative.

https://31fd7e92-5a8d-4046-99aa-dd8ff19cd0c1.filesusr.com/ugd/ddc900_515ba5003c4b4fa7ba6a91f52fb0b824.pdf

Family Ministry Exploration – Embracing each aspect of our Vision and Mission

This spring, the Minister, the RE Council and the Committee on Ministry are engaging in the planning of a new approach to faith formation for the children and parents at Starr King. A short time ago we engaged in a conversation with the Family Minister at Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Marin in San Rafael where we heard about new approaches to “Sunday School.” This traditional approach which revolves around a classroom served churches in the past but do not necessarily meet contemporary families’ needs. *Changes in demographics family structures, societal norms, and the role of the church in dominant white US cultures have evolved* (Sweeny, pg. 16). Kimberly Sweeney, in her book, *The Death of Sunday School and the Faith Formation*, alerts us to certain realities:

- Attendance is down in Sunday School;
- Children attend sporadically;
- Volunteer teachers and trained religious educators are hard to find, and
- Families are choosing between spending time together on Sundays or being separated at church (pg. 17).

The expressed needs of Starr King parents and families, these acknowledged demographic trends, and our current fiscal challenges have created **an opportunity for us to re-envision and re-create faith formation** so that it is unique to our children and their parents in this time and place. No one model of Faith Formation that fits all; how Faith Formation will evolve at Starr King from the conversations already begun. Prior to “Shelter-in-Place,” we anticipated the following time frame:

- March – Rev. Dr. María Cristina and Rev. Jim Lewis will research the variety of models for family ministry
- April – Conduct Focus Groups using the Appreciative Inquiry process to identify preferences and to educate the congregation about this new approach
- May – Synthesize the information expressed as our best hope/aspirations and how to match that with our resources
- Summer – Based on congregational feedback and resources available, define the future direction including the writing of a job description for a coordinator; training a core of volunteers, etc.
- June – vacation time for volunteers
- July and August – children summer camp
- September – Implement new plan

From the envisioning team:

Mileva Lewis (chair & Appreciative Inquiry facilitator)

Rev. María Cristina

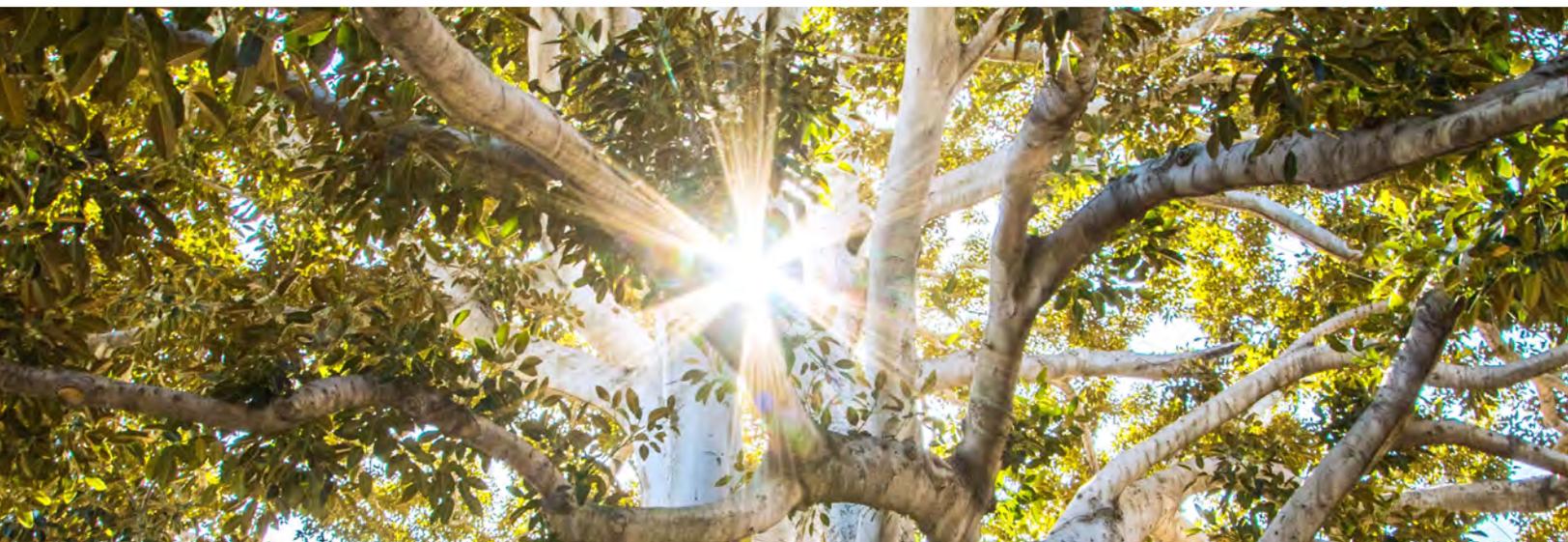
Jennifer Koney, President of the Board of Trustees

Terri Owen, congregational representative

Keith Lewis (Committee on Ministry)

Beth Ogilvie (Committee on Ministry)

NOTE: This plan was developed well before Covid-19 and given Shelter-in-Place it is not appropriate at this time. The Envisioning Team will re-convene in another month and determine how best to move forward. This does not diminish our commitment to Children’s RE and our transition to Family Ministry. We will continue to address the spiritual needs of our children.



RE Reflections

“There is a love holding me, there is a love holding you, there is a loving holding us all, may we rest in that love.”

In these rapidly changing and difficult times, maintaining a sense of community is more important than ever. We are connecting in new ways, with Zoom-based worship and weekly family story time and check-in. Currently, we are meeting on Thursdays at 7:00 pm. Please join us for this online zoom meeting if you are able. We want to know how you are doing and how we can support you. So please reach out if you need anything or have any suggestions. Caring for ourselves and each other is the most important thing we can do right now. I hold you all in my heart during these challenging times and pray for your health and safety. Let's stay in touch.

– Allison Prout

Screenshot of virtual RE Storytime March 26th



Life Care Planning Session

Session is subject to shelter-in-place rules
Choosing How You Want to Live Until You Die

*Why is it so hard to talk about death?
Let's acknowledge the elephant in the room.
We are death avoidant.*

Let's Face Our Fears and Make Difficult Conversations Easier



**Who should attend this two-hour session and why?
Any adult of any age! Consider this...**

You're in an accident and are taken to the Emergency Room, unconscious, in a coma and doctors doubt you will ever recover.

Your parents' health is declining; what would you do if they/he/she were in a coma with little hope of recovering?

Who will decide? How will they know what you want?

This Life Care Planning Session will help you

Break the cycle of silence about death

Talk to your family, loved ones, and health care provider

Know your rights and responsibilities and those of your health care provider

Discuss life care planning choices: Options, benefits, risks

Facilitator

Mileva Saulo Lewis, EdD, RN
Nurse Ethicist, Mediator, End-of-Life Care Coach

**Postponed due to COVID-19/TBD – check
starrking.org for updates**

Ongoing Activities

All in-person activities done virtually (or cancelled) until further notice.
Please check the website at starring.org for updates.

Book Group+: Mistakes and Miracles	Meets every 1st and 3rd Monday at 7:15pm in the sanctuary.
Choir Practice	Meets every Sunday from 9–10:15am in the Fellowship Hall
Church Bookstore	Open on the third Sunday of the month, after the service
Drum Circle	First Friday of the month, 7–9pm, in the Sanctuary. For adults and mature kids.
Evening Meditation	Every Wednesday, 7:30–8:45pm. Open to all.
Elderberries	Third Wednesday of the month, at noon. For self-identified elders. Bring your lunch.
Small Group Ministry	Contact sgm@starring.org for more information.
Board Meeting	First Thursday of the month, 7–9pm in Fellowship Hall. Open to all.
Adult RE	Second Tuesday of the Month from 11–12 noon in Conference Room.



Starr King Church Calendar

<<	Apr 2020						>>
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
29 • 10:30 AM Sunday Worship Service	30 • 6:30 PM Rainbow NA Meeting	31 • 3:00 PM Executive Committee Meeting	1 • 7:30 PM Evening Meditation	2 • 10:00 AM RE Council	3	4	
5 • 10:30 AM Sunday Worship Service	6 • 6:30 PM Rainbow NA Meeting • 7:00 PM BookGroup+	7	8 • 12:00 PM SGM Afternoons • 3:00 PM Pastoral Care Committee • 7:15 PM SGM Evenings	9	10	11	
12 • 10:30 AM Sunday Worship Service • 12:15 PM Peace & Justice Action Team	13 • 6:30 PM Rainbow NA Meeting	14 • 7:00 PM Worship Committee	15 • 7:30 PM Evening Meditation	16	17	18 • 10:00 AM Life Care Planning • 12:15 PM Adult RE	
19 • 10:30 AM Sunday Worship Service • 12:15 PM Earth Day Fair - tentative	20 • 6:30 PM Rainbow NA Meeting • 7:00 PM BookGroup+	21	22 • 12:00 PM SGM Afternoons • 7:15 PM SGM Evenings • 7:30 PM Evening Meditation	23 • 7:00 PM Board of Trustees	24	25 • 12:00 PM Financial Workshop for Women - tentative	
26 • 10:30 AM Sunday Worship Service	27 • 6:30 PM Rainbow NA Meeting	28	29 • 7:30 PM Evening Meditation	30	31 • 7:00 PM Drumming Circle		



April Birthdays

APRIL 3

Andrea Kuffin

APRIL 10

Karen Carrell

APRIL 11

Frank Satterwhite

APRIL 13

Robert Kern

APRIL 14

Georgia Gruver

APRIL 16

Molly Hitchings

APRIL 21

Andy Matthews

APRIL 23

Henry Wagner

APRIL 27

Stephanie Smith

APRIL 28

Charlie Murdach

APRIL 30

Bill Schuler